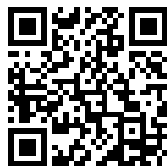


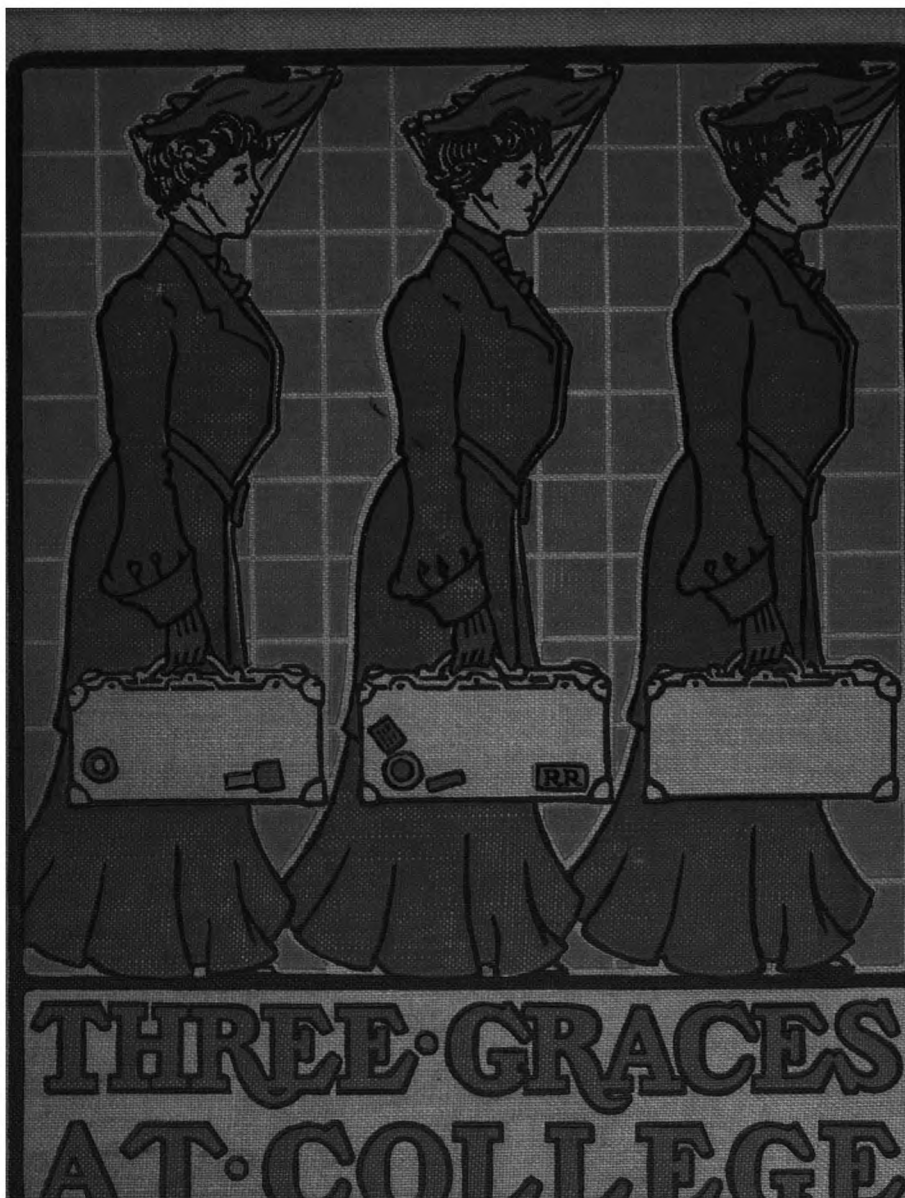
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# **THREE GRACES AT COLLEGE**

**A SEQUEL TO THREE GRACES**









Grace Percy was giving directions to the porter.

# THREE GRACES AT COLLEGE

A SEQUEL TO THREE GRACES

BY

GABRIELLE E. JACKSON

AUTHOR OF THREE GRACES, DENISE AND NED TODDLES  
PRETTY POLLY PERKINS, ETC.

ILLUSTRATED BY

C. M. RELYEA



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TO  
MY DEAR HUSBAND  
WHOSE FAITH AND PRIDE IN MY WORK  
HAVE BEEN A NEVER-FAILING  
SOURCE OF COMFORT AND INSPIRATION TO ME  
THIS LITTLE BOOK  
IS MOST AFFECTIONATELY  
INSCRIBED



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# THREE GRACES AT COLLEGE

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## CHAPTER I

THALIA, EUPHROSYNE, AND AGLAIA

"OH, let's send up our cases and walk, Grace. We can see all that's to be seen if we do, and I'm just wild to take in all that's to be taken."

"But it's late now, Grace, and we have loads of things to do before supper-time. Don't you think we'd better ride? The trolley runs almost to the door, or we can take a hack. Do let's be elegant. My goodness! it's such a novel experience for me to have a quarter to spend on hacking that you'd better let me take advantage of my riches," was Grace Percy's laughing answer to Grace Langford.

Just then Grace Houghton, who had been questioning a colored porter at the other end

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of the platform, came hurrying up to say: "He says the trunks arrived by the earlier train, just as Mr. Morford said they would, and he sent them 'up the hill,' wherever that may be. So the sooner we chase after them the better. Shall I call a cab, or are you going in a trolley, or how are we to go?"

"Grace wants to walk and see the sights, and—don't breathe it, Grace!—show off that swell traveling-suit of hers to the intense envy of the other girls. She thinks that even a freshman has some claim upon their admiration."

"How did you guess it, Grace?" was Grace Langford's prompt retort to this gibe.

"It was the result of my intimate knowledge of your pet vanities. But you prove the majority, Grace Houghton, and decide the question before we settle right here on this platform for the rest of the afternoon."

"Oh, come along, Grace, and walk. We need the exercise after all these hours of railway travel."

The "Three Graces" stood upon the plat-

## THALIA, EUPHROSYNE, AND AGLAIA

form of the station as the train from which they had just alighted went puffing and panting upon its way, to drop at stations farther up the line the few remaining passengers which it carried, for a general exodus seemed to have taken place at the station it was so rapidly leaving behind, and specimens of every conceivable type of femininity were dotted all along the platform. Two or three girls who were standing near the Graces glanced quickly in their direction as Grace Houghton rejoined the others, and when the three names were so rapidly spoken, an odd smile overspread the face of one of them. They paused in their greetings to follow the glance of their companion, and became aware of the cause of her peculiar expression.

"Have the 'Charities' been turned loose in a body upon the old Alma Mater?" asked one.

"So it would seem. All three of them. Well, Ardwell can boast more than most colleges in having Thalia, Euphrosyne, and Aglaia in her

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midst, and in the very flesh. What inspirations, Bess!"

"Hush! They'll hear you, Corinne," was the warning whispered.

"Suppose they do? It's well for freshmen to shake down into their proper places at once. *We* all had to, and it was wonderfully wholesome," was the laughing retort, as the girl gathered up her rather voluminous skirts, and grasping her suit-case, nodded a farewell to the others. As she stepped from the station platform she cast a rapid, rather challenging, glance over her shoulder at the Graces. Grace Percy and Grace Langford were too occupied to notice it, but Grace Houghton caught it, and no tennis-ball was ever "returned" with more lightning rapidity and precision. How strangely a glance can affect us! That girl and Grace Houghton would exchange more than glances in the course of time.

Meanwhile Grace Percy was giving directions to the porter, and presently all three set forth.

Three months had passed since the trio had

## THALIA, EUPHROSYNE, AND AGLAIA

met, and, even though letters had passed between them with surprising regularity, no hand-clasp or spoken word had been possible since they went upon their divided ways in June, and three months is a tremendously long interval when one is not yet twenty. Moreover, three months had brought marked changes into all three lives. Grace Langford's holiday had been passed in Europe, where she enjoyed it as only a happy, care-free, Southern girl can enjoy. Grace Houghton had been with Mr. and Mrs. Percy, truly one of their family, for each day she grew more warmly attached to each member of it, and they had grown to love the wayward girl as they had never believed it possible to. Grace Percy had never for a moment wavered in her attachment once she had taken Grace Houghton for her friend, but the girl had to grow into the affections of the others. Day by day Grace was learning the meaning of such a home as Mrs. Percy's; learning to understand what harmony and unity meant, for Mrs. Percy had kept her promise in word and deed and this

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girl, who had come into their lives so strangely, was now truly one of them.

Notwithstanding her recent loss and isolated position, the summer had been a happy one for Grace; happier in many ways than she had ever known, for into her life had unconsciously crept a peace and tranquillity which heretofore she had never missed because they were unknown to her, but which were now having their effect upon her turbulent nature. Before laying any plans for their summer's outing, which Mr. Percy's improved circumstances now made possible for his family, arrangements had been made for the Graces' final examinations, and for a short time their fates caused the girls no little anxiety. Six months earlier in her life Grace Houghton would have felt very little concern about it one way or the other, but association was doing more for her than hours of moral lecturing could have compassed.

The days which followed their examinations, in which they awaited the letters which would settle the question, were, as Grace Percy ex-

### THALIA, EUPHROSYNE, AND AGLAIA

pressed it, "days in which one felt one's hair turning white." At length the letters arrived. Grace Percy had qualified without a condition. Grace Houghton was conditioned. A year earlier this would have been sufficient to discourage her, and college could have gone to Jericho, or any other remote place. But the closing weeks at Laurel Hill had produced something, and Mrs. Percy's gentle training was producing even more. Instead of the reproachful attitude which Grace had half convinced herself Mrs. Percy would assume toward her in the event of failure and the implied disappointment at her inability to matriculate when Grace Percy did, or the unspoken hint that she might have done so had she done her duty earlier at Laurel Hill, she met with the treatment best suited to develop her latent ambition and incite in her perverse nature the desire to come out successful in spite of every obstacle.

They were sitting in Mr. Percy's study one warm July morning, when the neat maid, who had been installed in the home as soon as Mr.



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Percy's business affairs made it possible, entered the room with the important missives. Grace Percy opened hers hurriedly, glanced at the contents, gave a jubilant screech, bounded to her feet, and went prancing around the room, waving her letter wildly over her head as she cried:

"I've passed! I've passed! I haven't a single condition! I'm a full-fledged freshman at Ardwell! Hug me tight, Daddykins, or I'll fly all to pieces!"

Grace Houghton read her letter more slowly, and her face wore an odd expression as she laid it upon the table and her eyes followed Grace's antics. Mrs. Percy had been watching the girl narrowly, realizing in that tender, motherly heart of hers how keen was this girl's disappointment, and how she was striving to conceal it beneath a mask of pride. So she did one of the things which mothers were made for doing: walked quietly across the room, laid her hand gently upon Grace's shoulder, rested her face against her dark hair, and said softly:

## THALIA, EUPHROSYNE, AND AGLAIA

"Those long weeks of illness stole more than your roses, did they not, dear? Well, it will be odd if we do not bring the thieves to conviction. With Mr. Percy, Grace, and all of us in full cry after them, I fancy that we shall soon recover from them all they took from you. So do not lose courage.—And now, father, suppose we talk over our summer's outing. These girls all need a merry-making after their long winter's work."

Mr. Percy took his family to Toronto, where his only brother made them welcome in true English fashion, and during the long, delightful weeks spent on the lake's shore Grace Houghton and Mr. Percy stole away for two hours each day, and in them Grace learned the value of a fine mind, and to love study for its own sake; learned what concentration meant, and learned to love this courtly old gentleman who knew so well how to weave into even the dullest subject a golden thread of interest. The two hours devoted to study were often spent upon the lake, where Mr. Percy pulled about in the light skiff

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while Grace solved knotty problems. Or they rowed to one of the pretty islands to delve deep into old English, and Grace little realized how strong an impression the surroundings were making upon her. That came in after-years, when those subjects were never touched upon without bringing before her mental vision varied pictures of beautiful Lake Ontario, in its dreamy summer atmosphere and its picturesque little islands.

These had been new experiences for Grace, although more than once the old restlessness had returned and the old impatience come near putting an end to decorum, study, and everything else. But as though they were quite alive to such moral and mental volcanic rumblings, both Mr. and Mrs. Percy instinctively met these moods and handled them with the wisdom born of love and patience for those younger than themselves.

Grace herself never suspected how clear a page her character was to them, for they never gave the least hint of their knowledge, invari-

## THALIA, EUPHROSYNE, AND AGLAIA

ably treating her with gentleness and affection, and implying by their attitudes toward her such boundless faith in her that she was touched by it, and stimulated to deserve it. This was such a contrast to the line of conduct which it had been her lot to encounter in her earlier years and, indeed, not so remote a period of her life, that she was often obliged to give herself a little mental shake to realize it. The girl had gone through life with a false start, and when one begins in that way it is no easy matter to get set right. Indeed, we can not do it unaided. It needs just such natures as Mrs. Percy's to check us for a moment in our career, soothe and quiet us, and start us afresh.

Consequently, long before the Canadian visit came to an end Grace was in a fair way to enter the college with her friends, and when the final examinations were taken passed most creditably.

When the college opened its doors in September to eight or nine hundred ambitious maids of all degrees, none who entered its doors

### THREE GRACES AT COLLEGE

was better equipped to strive for the honors it had to offer than Grace Houghton, thanks to the good friend left behind her in New York.

The send-off from the depot had been a funny one, for Daniel Morford, now as much at home as in his mother's immaculate kitchen in Trenton's suburbs, was on hand to see to everything and everybody, and it was due to his forethought that the trunks had been sent on ahead, and were now awaiting the girls "up the hill."

They had come home from Canada by way of the St. Lawrence and the New England States, in order that Mr. and Mrs. Percy might make all arrangements for the girls at the college town. They were too late to secure rooms on the campus, but pleasant ones were found in a private house within easy walking distance of the college buildings. Grace Langford had begged them to complete all arrangements for her also, and, consequently, three bedrooms and a pretty sitting-room had been engaged in Mrs. Ward's house, thereby disposing of all that good lady had to offer in the way of

## THALIA, EUPHROSYNE, AND AGLAIA

accommodations, and promptly winning her heart, although she little suspected that her modest dwelling would promptly be christened Helicon Hall, the hill upon which it stood, Parnassus, and she, herself, Aphrodite, although anything in human form and feature less like that beauteous creature than Mrs. Ward it would be hard to conceive, for Mrs. Ward had drifted into the Bay State from Brooklyn, and there had drifted with her some, aye, many, of the peculiarities of that city of vaulting ambitions, as later events will disclose. She still retained her admiration for things Brooklyn-like, and frequently manifested it.

So toward No. 17 Willow Road the girls set out. It was about four o'clock as they stepped into the long, quiet street, with its beautiful elm-trees swaying in the soft September air, and the slanting rays of the sun making ever-changing shadow pictures through their fairy-like foliage. They were in no hurry, for all about them were novel sights, and girls seemed to fairly overrun the town. Some who

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seemed strangers to the place hurried along in quest of their new abiding-places. Some, like the Graces, were bent upon gratifying their curiosity regarding their surroundings. Some tripped along with the assurance of old residents, greeting and greeted by all whom they met. Some were accompanied by anxious relatives, obviously desirous of settling their charges safely under the protecting wing of their chosen college. All were busy with their plans for the long winter of hard work ahead of them.

As the Graces turned into the broad main street their first little experience of the true college atmosphere in which the town was steeped began to take shape.

## CHAPTER II

### THE GRACES MEET APHRODITE

A GROUP of spotless duck-clad girls stood in front of a druggist's windows, through which glimpses of a large soda-fountain and inviting little tables beyond could be seen. Girls were passing up and down in front of the store, and as the Graces drew near, one of the girls of the group took a step forward, her face lighting up as she cried:

"Oh, here you are, Gay girlie! How do you do?"

Grace Langford glanced up in surprise, for the name used was the one by which she was always called at home, and it was but natural that she should believe herself the one addressed. The speaker noticed her surprise, but at the same moment a voice behind the Graces answered—



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"Coming as fast as my ten toes will let me. Awfully sorry to be so late, but just *had* to decide before that blessed little mother of mine departed whether I'd elect astronomy or biology, in order to save her peace of mind, and it was a subject for thought, let me tell you."

The Graces glanced quickly over their shoulders, and their eyes encountered as merry dancing a pair of brown ones as ever looked out of a human head. Instinctively Grace Langford smiled and nodded, and then blushed at her temerity, realizing that she, a freshman, had taken the initiative—a thing no freshman can do and survive instant annihilation by an upper classman. The laughing, snapping brown eyes noted Grace's embarrassment, and their owner, without an instant's hesitation, put forth a small, shapely hand, tanned brown as a berry by a summer's outing, smiled broadly, thus displaying absolutely faultless teeth, and said:

"Are you Gay, too? Figuratively speaking, we're all gay here, although literally I've

## THE GRACES MEET APHRODITE

claimed the honor thus far. Must I share it now?"

"The literal part—yes. The figurative remains to be tested; it largely depends upon what I'm up against," was Grace's laughing reply, as she placed her small gloved hand in the hand extended.

"Then you are swelling our freshman list? Would you mind telling me your name? Mine is Gay Whiteley, 1902. My request may be a little unusual, but I'm given to doing unusual things, so I'm told. Please introduce your friends."

Not a moment were the brown eyes still, and the three new arrivals were as effectually "sized up" by those quick, flitting glances as though the girl had deliberately studied each one of them.

"I am Grace Langford; this is Grace Percy; and this Grace Houghton," said Grace, indicating her friends.

"Awfully glad to know you, but how did you all happen to hit upon the same name? Now

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you must know my friends." When the introductions had been made, Gay Whitely said:

"We're all going to have an ice. Will you come with us? This is Randall's, and it's part of your education to know Randall's. Better begin at once."

"It's awfully kind of you to take us all under your wing so promptly, but we must hie us to 17 Willow Road, or Mrs. Ward will have the town crier out to hunt us up I'm afraid," said Grace Percy.

"Oh, are you going to live at *Mrs. Ward's*? I was there last year—for a *while*. Hope you'll like it." The merry lips quivered as the hope was expressed, and Grace's eyelids raised questioningly.

"Can't tell secrets. You'll make your own discoveries. Good-by," and the group turned into the shop, as the Graces started upon their way.

"Now will you be good enough to tell us *why* you did that, Gay?" demanded one of the girls as they took their seats at the soda-fountain.

## THE GRACES MEET APHRODITE

"Would you really like to know? Well, for three distinct and separate reasons: Item one, my namesake looked a thoroughbred; the tall Grace looked as though she had brains; the third Grace had a lonely, hungry look in her eyes."

"How under the sun did you arrive at those conclusions so speedily?"

"By the power of my wonderful intuitions, Belle. Haven't you reached that degree of perception after a whole year's constant association with me?"

"I've arrived at a degree of *conviction* which tells me that no mortal creature can ever know what you will do next."

"I'll wager you three treats that I'm right about those girls, though, and you see if they don't do us proud."

Meanwhile, the Graces were climbing the hill, and in a short time arrived at 17 Willow Road, a pretty little dwelling, tucked cozily away behind some swaying willow-trees. As the girls stepped upon the piazza they were greeted by a series of sharp barks from within doors

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"An animal abideth here. Wonder if it can be Cerberus? Girls, did you ever hear that the animal was interested in the Graces as well as Eurydice?" asked Grace Langford, but before a reply could be made, the door opened in response to Grace Percy's ring, and out tumbled as ugly a specimen of dogdom as ever navigated upon four crooked legs. He tore across the piazza directly beneath the girls' feet, and his cannon-ball exit very nearly knocked Grace Houghton down the steps she had just ascended. But Grace was not given to meekly submitting to ill-usage, and a stout umbrella promptly descended upon the animal's broad back. He gave a yelp, fled down the steps, and vanished around the side of the house. The maid who had opened the door gave a little startled cry, then clapped her hand over her mouth and looked as frightened as though the umbrella had fallen upon her own plump shoulders.

"What is the matter, Maggie? What made Darling cry?" called a voice from somewhere within.

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"I think he hit his head agin the side of the door, ma'am," answered the maid, making frantic pantomimes to the girls, which they interpreted as imploring silence as to the true cause of Darling's woe.

"Who is there?" continued the invisible voice.

"The young college ladies, ma'am."

"Oh! Oh!! Oh!!!" in increasing staccato. "I'm delighted! Why in the world don't you ask them to come right in, Maggie? Dear me, to keep those sweet girls standing on the piazza. Maggie, how can you? Come right in, dears. Your rooms are all ready for you, and *so* attractive. I know you'll be charmed with them, especially your study."

As the volley of words poured forth, the voice came nearer and nearer, and presently a tall, rather heavily built woman, with dark hair elaborately waved over a high pompadour, and wearing a white muslin gown, much befrilled and beribboned, appeared in the doorway. She extended to the girls two large, winged

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hands—she would, no doubt, have extended six had she happened to have them—and drew them into the pretty foyer hall, exclaiming:

“Tired to death, aren’t you, after that long ride from New York? Well, come right upstairs with me, and your lovely rooms will make you feel rested even if you ain’t.”

She hurried on ahead of them, and the girls followed like sheep, for this whirlwind of a woman seemed fairly to take their breath from them. They paused at the top of the stairs while their hostess hurried across the hall and flung open a door leading into the second story front room, and announced with very evident satisfaction:

“*This* is to be your study! Ain’t it a dear? Could anything be sweeter for three girls?”

It was, in truth, an attractive room. A pretty rug in soft shades of green covered the hardwood floor; an inviting divan, with cover and pillows in the same shades of green, filled the broad window; and the furniture, if somewhat

## THE GRACES MEET APHRODITE

elaborate for the size of the house, was certainly of an excellent quality. Their hostess hurried from one article to another, giving a little pat here, a stroke there, as she kept up a steady volley of words.

"Now, you dears, come and see your respective rooms. Let me see, *you* are Miss Percy; that I know because you came with your father and mother. But I don't know how to fit your names to you two. Oh, yes, I guess I do, too. Anybody'd know *you* came from Dixie, so you're Miss Langford. So, of course, you've got to be Miss Houghton. Now choose your rooms quick, and for pity's sake don't quarrel over them, 'cause one's just as pretty as the other. Why don't you take this bedroom, Miss Percy? It's just your color—all light green and fresh. Miss Langford, you want the red room, I know. All Southerners like red. So Miss Houghton will *have* to take the rose room. What is it Shakespeare says about a rose? Dear me, I'm forgettin' all my poetry, but I'll have to brush up a little if I'm to live in a college town or the girls



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will know more'n I do. Now I hope you'll be happy and comfortable. I guess you will, too. I've done everything *I* know how to make you. Why I sent way to Loeser's store in Brooklyn—you know Loeser's, of course? Finest store there. I've traded with 'em for years and years. Well, I sent way there for this set of furniture. Just look inside these *chiffonya* drawers! Every one satin-wood lined. I had to pay twenty-six dollars for that alone. Don't scratch it, will you?"

Grace Langford drew a long breath, and collapsed upon the divan. Grace Houghton fled into the rose room, but Grace Percy rallied to ask:

"Has the expressman delivered our trunks yet, Mrs. Ward? The porter at the station said they arrived by an earlier train, and that he had sent them up."

"Dear child, yes. Of course, they are here. They are in the cellar, and you may go right down there and unpack them just as soon as you want to."

## THE GRACES MEET APHRODITE

"In the cellar!" echoed Grace. "Did he refuse to bring them to our rooms, Mrs. Ward?"

"Oh, dear no! But I *never* allow trunks to be carried through my house. It would ruin the stairs and walls. It won't be a particle of trouble for you to take your things out in the cellar, and Maggie will help you carry them all upstairs."

Grace listened quietly to this surprising announcement, and somehow managed to keep her countenance in spite of the pantomime taking place behind Mrs. Ward's back, where Grace Langford was nodding, silently clapping her hands and swaying her body in true darkey fashion, and Grace Houghton shaking her umbrella threateningly.

"But, Mrs. Ward, we wish and must have our trunks in our rooms."

"Now, my dear child, *that* is out of the question! *None* of my boarders have ever *thought* of opposing me. I'm old enough to be your mother, although you wouldn't guess it, would you now? So be reasonable. like a good child."

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"I am sorry to seem unreasonable, Mrs. Ward, but I shall have to insist upon having my trunk in my room, and I think the other girls will feel the same about it," said Grace, turning to them in sheer desperation.

"I've just one thing to say in the matter, and that is all: Unless I can have my trunk in my room in this house, I shall have to go to one where I may," affirmed Grace Houghton, with whom this high-handed dealing was beginning to tell, and the old spirit once roused was not easily quelled.

Grace Langford now thought it high time to help paddle this family canoe, so walking close up to Mrs. Ward, she looked smilingly into that good lady's face, and asked in her softest Southern drawl:

"Mrs. Ward, do you seriously reckon I'm going to trot up and down your cellar-stairs every time I want something out of my trunk? La, child, I'd wear out more stair-carpet, to say nothing of my *shoes*, in a week than my board-bill would pay for in a *year*. Why, I go to that

## THE GRACES MEET APHRODITE

trunk twenty-five times a day! I'd sure enough live in your cellar, and think what a reputation that would establish for you in the college when we gossiped about it to the other girls. Better send up those trunks, Mrs. Ward."

But Mrs. Ward was backing through the door, and at the last word fled down the stairs. Grace Percy insisted afterward that it was Grace's softly drawled "La, child," which routed her, but Grace Houghton vowed that one of Grace Langford's black eyes had been laughing at Mrs. Ward all the while, and the other snapping little warning sparks.

As the last ribbon fluttered down the stairs Grace Langford dropped her umbrella and hand-satchel upon the floor with a clatter, rushed for the window-seat and buried her head in its cushions to smother her shrieks of laughter. Grace Percy collapsed into a chair to demand:

"Girls, what *are* we up against?"

"I'll tell you," announced Grace Houghton, whose temper was still ruffled, but who could not

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help joining in the gale. "We're up against a *crank*, and just as sure as you live, *one* of us will have to give it a twist sooner or later, and I'm *deadly* afraid it will be *this* child."

## CHAPTER III

### GETTING ACQUAINTED

"GIRLS, can you realize it?" cried Grace Percy, popping a towsy head through her bedroom door to peep into their cozy study.

"I've been sticking pins into my neck just as fast as I could in order to arouse myself to the truth, and incidentally fasten my collar," called Grace Langford from her room just beyond. "Where's Grace? I haven't heard a sound from the 'rose room' yet. Is she busy hunting up quotations for Aphrodite?"

"Don't you believe it!" was promptly called from the rear room, where Grace Houghton was going through with her usual morning tussle with her curly hair. "I've got all *I* can attend to with this mop upon my crown. Why *did* nature afflict me with it? I know it's responsible for my disposition. If Anhrrodite were to

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show her face at this moment I'm sure mine would petrify her like Medusa's. I'm not drawn to her at best."

"Can't I help you?" asked Grace Percy, laughing as she entered Grace's room. "Here, sit down and let me play maid; it won't be the first time."

"Yes, do, for mercy's sake! You have a magnetic influence upon my wits and my wool—sort of smooth the kinks out of both," said Grace, as she rested her head for one brief second upon Grace Percy's shoulder, and then dropped into the chair which stood before the pretty dressing-table. Grace very rarely demonstrated any affection. She had been forced to live too many years within self to do so naturally. She seemed to regard such demonstrations as evidences of weakness upon her part, although evidently pleased when others manifested their affection for her. The pathos of it lay in the fact that the girl actually did not know *how* to show others that she cared for them, even though she was capable of strong attachments,

## GETTING ACQUAINTED

as had been proven by her love for Grace Percy.

Grace Percy realized this, and the little fleeting caresses which this friend sometimes bestowed upon her meant far more than the pronounced demonstrations of a more emotional girl would have meant.

Before they had quite completed their toilets a bell tinkled the breakfast-hour, and all three hurried to answer the summons. Mrs. Ward, with Maggie close upon her heels, bearing the coffee-service, came bustling into the dining-room.

"Good morning, dears," she cried, all trace of the previous evening's perturbation vanished. "Dear me, you are as fresh and immaculate as you please, ain't you? Three ducks, I might call you, only your piques. Ain't any such bird as that, is there?"

"I never heard of one, did you, honey?" asked Grace Langford. "But ducks are pretty things—until they grow to be quacks. Wonder what four years will make of us girls?"



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"Depends upon what we 'elect' largely, doesn't it?" asked Grace Houghton.

"Going to study electricity?" asked Mrs. Ward, who had been bustling about the room, and now had her head stuck through the little window of the pantry which communicated with Maggie's domains, and consequently did not hear all of Grace's words.

"Our courses have not yet been fully decided upon," answered Grace Percy politely, as she bent over her coffee-cup.

"Well, eat a good breakfast, and that'll brace you up wonderfully. I always say——"

What she was about to disclose in the way of wise maxims remained forever a secret, for just at that moment there arose from without as doleful a wail as ever assailed human ears. The girls jumped.

"Oh, Maggie, open the door quick! It's Darling. Poor dear, he has hardly seen his mamma this morning. Come right here, sweetness! Yes, *you shall* have your breakfast, you treasure. Isn't he the dearest dog you ever saw,

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girls? No other name would suit him, would it? Come! Come!"

The last words were addressed to the hideous animal which had come so near landing Grace Houghton in an ignominious heap at the bottom of the piazza steps the previous afternoon. When the door which led to the back piazza from the dining-room was opened, Darling tumbled through it, rushed across the room, and bounded into his mistress's outstretched arms. There had been a slight shower during the night, and the animal's feet were far from clean, but this did not have the least influence upon his owner. She gathered the burly beast, mud and all, into her arms, and proceeded to kiss and fondle him, and call him by all the endearing names in the dictionary, ending by pouring some coffee into her saucer and letting him lap it.

"Don't you *adore* dogs? I do. I've had Darling six years, and if anything should happen to him I'm sure it would kill me. Buddie says—that's my son. You didn't know I had a

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son, did you? Well, I have. He's twenty-six years old, too. He's in Boston—a practisin' physician. That's why *I'm* here. Never'd left Brooklyn in this world if it hadn't been for *him*. Wanted to be nearer to him, and thought I'd combine business and pleasure, you see. Well, Buddie says I'm foolish about Darling, but pooh! he don't mean it; he often says more'n his prayers."

"Please, Mrs. Ward, I would like another cup of coffee," broke in Grace Houghton.

"Certainly, certainly. Pass me your cup." She made an arm over the dog's back to reach the cup held out to her, and a rumbling growl testified to the animal's disapproval at being squeezed between Mrs. Ward's rotund figure and the edge of the table.

"Oh, you precious baby! Did mamma hurt you?" cried his mistress, setting the cup upon the table to fondle her pet and soothe his outraged feelings. "He's *so* sensitive and *so* *jealous*, you can't think. Won't hardly let Buddie kiss me when he comes to see me, yet he's de-

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voted to Buddie, too," she explained for the girls' benefit. Then placing the dog tenderly upon the floor, she proceeded to fill the coffee-cup.

Half an hour later, as the girls were walking down the hill to the college buildings, Grace Houghton demanded:

"Heavens and earth, girls, do you suppose we've got to stand that dog at every meal? I'll either go crazy or kill him."

"I wonder if 'Buddie' is as big a fool as his foster-brother, Darling?" said Grace Langford. "Don't be surprised if you hear of the latter's sudden demise. Hitherto I've not been able to decide upon the electives, but now my mind is made up. I shall *do* Chemistry from A to Z, and if I do not concoct a dog-biscuit which will prove both edible and efficacious, my name is not Grace Langford."

"And yet she *looks* so mild," was Grace Percy's laughing comment, as she laid her arm across Grace's shoulder and gave her a little

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"Mild! How long do you think any of us will retain even a semblance of manners polite if we have to sit at table with that grinning beast day after day? But here we are, so let's put on our best behavior, and smooth out our frowns in order to appear nice, model little freshmen. My heart! where *do* all the girls come from?"

They climbed the broad stairway which led to the chapel, and were greeted at the top by their friend of the previous afternoon.

"Good morning! You come to chapel as though it were an old story to you, one and all. Who'd ever guess you were frightened freshmen?" she cried merrily.

"Do we look easily daunted?" asked Grace Percy, her eyes twinkling with fun.

"Only the least little bit of a quiver way down in our boots, where it can't be seen," added Grace Langford, whose looks belied her words, for Grace had seen too much of the world during her journeyings over the sea to find six or eight hundred girls very appalling.

"I may not *look* scared, because my thoughts

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are too much occupied with speculations as to that girl's performances," said Grace Houghton, indicating a rather remarkable-looking young woman whose attire seemed about to take flight.

Gay Whiteley glanced in the direction Grace was looking, and began to laugh. "One of our celebrities, my dear. Class of Naughty-one; strong on dead languages and astronomy. We can't quite decide whether it's the aerial flights or the delving which is responsible for the loose ends, so to speak, but if you happen to pick up any pins, or have a few about you that you can spare as well as not, drop them into her satchel as you pass by; it's always open. She will never know you have done it, but will be sort of generally grateful to find them when she claws about in search of a dozen or so to fasten her garments in place. But come with me. We are at liberty to sit where we choose this morning, although to-morrow the sheep will be divided from the goats."

The girls glanced about them as they took their seats, but were presently lost to everything

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but the impressive service, and the melody rolling in wonderful sound-waves from the great organ. When the service ended, the chapel was speedily emptied of all save the freshmen, who were requested to remain and meet their class officer.

In the course of time the Graces managed to get the tangle of "Elective" and "Required" studies straightened out, and were then free to go upon exploring expeditions about the campus.

"Now let's go and find out where we are at," said Grace Houghton. "I've no more idea which building is which than if I were a cat turned loose in the middle of a town."

About half an hour later as they were strolling about, a girl came toward them. She wore a shirt-waist suit of old blue percale elaborately trimmed with white braid, and a large white felt hat with a monstrous quill stuck through the fold of silk which encircled the crown. Neither Grace Percy nor Grace Langford had ever seen her before, but Grace Houghton instantly recognized in her the girl who had thrown the chal-

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lenging glance at the railway station. She approached them with a half-cordial, half-patronizing manner, and asked:

"May I have the pleasure of knowing 'the Graces'?"

Grace Langford happened to be a few steps in advance of the others, and looking their questioner straight in the eyes, her own twinkling the while, replied as quick as a flash:

"If we may have the pleasure of knowing the fresh and winning 'Hebe'; wasn't it 'Hebe,' girls, who did the social act in Olympus?"

The question was asked in Grace's best manner, but the shot did not miss the mark. The girl's eyelids contracted for a second, and then a smile broke over her face as she replied:

"I think you'll hold your own. May I know your names? I tried to look you up in the catalogue, and fit the right ones to you, but there is only one thing I am sure of—Grace fits all."

It would have been impossible to tell from the swift glance given by those large, shining eyes whether this speech was intended to hear coals



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of fire upon Grace Langford's head or was entirely sincere.

"Let me straighten it out for you," said Grace Percy, and at once proceeded to fit the names to their proper owners.

"Thanks; my name is Corrine Esterbrook, '02, and I've come to ask one of you to go with me to the Freshman Frolic. Which am I to choose? It's a case, I'm afraid, of 'how happy could I be with either were 'tother dear charmer away.'"

"Take Grace Houghton; she is the shy one of our trio, and will feel more comfortable to know that she has a protector," cried Grace Langford, turned toward Grace Houghton, and showing all her pretty white teeth in a merry laugh at Grace's, "How dare you?"

"Will you come?"

The two girls looked straight into each other's eyes as Grace said politely, "With pleasure."

"Thanks. Now let me introduce you to these girls, for I know they are on the lookout for you, and then the set will be filled out." She

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turned to greet the two girls who were drawing near.

"Miss Whiteley, Miss Kingsley, let me make you acquainted with Miss Percy, Miss Houghton, and Miss Langford. I'm sure you are in quest of partners for the frolic, and you are favored."

"I think I've forestalled you a little, Corrine, for I've already had the pleasure of making their acquaintance," cried Gay Whiteley, as she fell into line beside Grace Langford.

"I'm very glad to know you," was Miss Kingsley's cordial greeting.

"Miss Langford is going to favor me, aren't you?" asked Gay, as she looked down upon dainty Grace.

"And Miss Percy and I were measured by nature for partners, weren't we?" said Alice Kingsley, as she placed herself at Grace's side and glanced sidewise to compare their heights.

"Exactly!" agreed Grace, in her bright, cheery manner.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE EVANS HOUSE DRAMATICS

FRESHMAN Frolic and the Sophomore Dance were things of the past. Even Mountain Day had come and gone, and now November was numbering off its weeks upon the calendar. The Graces were in the full swing of college work and college fun, for it had not taken them long to slip into their places, and the Hallowe'en fun seemed to have removed the last barrier, for with the pranks of that wild night, on which Grace Houghton and Grace Langford had added so materially to the merry-making—one by her vivacity, and the other by her powers of mimicry—they seemed to have dropped all sense of new surroundings and unfamiliar environment, and become a part of the great whole. The girls who had escorted them to the Freshman Frolic had also been their partners at the Sophomore Dance,

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and had done their duty womanfully, as the dance cards testified. Gay Whiteley and Alice Kingsley roomed together in the Evans House, but Corrine was "doomed," as she expressed it, to dwell with a sedate, devout young woman from western New York. Perhaps the powers in charge had something to do with this plan, for during her freshman year Corrine had roomed with Pearl Henderson, a young lady who had been made to understand that a college course was purely time misplaced for one of her versatile nature.

As Corrine was somewhat given to versatility herself, the union of forces so brought about created many diversions for those in authority, and at the close of the year some heads boasted more white hairs than had been apparent at the beginning.

At the Freshman Frolic the class had been toasted and cheered by the Glee Club, and as the girls went home through the moonlit streets the toasts still rang in their ears.

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“Oh, here’s to Naughty-three!  
She’s as fresh as she can be!  
Drink her down! Drink her down!  
Drink her down, down, down!”

Class meeting had also taken place, and the class president been elected. The class color—violet—was chosen, and was now in evidence in the room of every freshman in college, where it appeared in all conceivable combinations with the college color, pale green.

The Graces made a magnificent banner of violet satin, with a large green '03 in the center, and fastened it above the window-seat in their study, much to Mrs. Ward's dismay, for that good lady had started out upon her boarding-house career with the firm determination of not only running her establishment according to her own ideas upon the subject, but of also running the people who might take up their abode therein. The previous year, her first as a boarding-house keeper in a New England town, she had experienced comparatively plain sailing, for the docile members of her household had permitted her to

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rule them without protest, and those who had ideas and opinions of their own promptly carried them elsewhere.

This year affairs had assumed a somewhat different aspect. Her rooms were rented to three girls whose motto was apparently, "United we stay; divided we go!" and she learned very speedily that if she overstepped with one of them she would surely have three to reckon with.

If she made it unpleasant for one, and forced her to depart, two more would speedily follow, and this to confront her in midwinter, when everybody had settled their plans for the year, was a contingency to be avoided if possible. Yet, it was no easy matter for this woman, who for years had ruled her home, her son, her dog, and her maids with a rod of iron, to yield one iota to three college girls. But she was by no means a fool, and was beginning to learn her limitations.

She enjoyed a moderate income, which would have enabled her to live simply and even comfortably in Brooklyn, or even in Ardwell, had she been willing to do so in a manner suited to

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her station in life, but she was consumed with a vaulting ambition to rival in elegance and display the homes of people whose incomes were represented by five instead of four figures. Every penny she could save from her household expenses was instantly invested in some article of furniture, or something to adorn her dwelling, whether it was suited to it or utterly out of place in its modest surroundings. In justice, it must be admitted that the article purchased was usually in good taste, although the other extreme was by no means entirely wanting in evidence. And so one thing after another appeared upon the scene, and with each new article Mrs. Ward's trials increased, for directly the new purchase was placed in her home her anxiety for it made her miserable, and she fussed and fretted from one day's end to the next lest it be defaced in some way.

And so she delved and labored to procure these luxuries, which instantly ceased to be luxuries, and became a burden directly they became hers, because of the anxiety they caused her. More-

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over, she was so fearful of harming them by use that she never had the least satisfaction in her possessions, but kept them carefully covered or sheltered behind closely drawn window-shades and curtains. A ray of sunlight falling upon one would have caused her a spasm, and woe to the luckless maid who failed to draw the shades the instant the sun crept around to that window.

She had hailed the Graces' advent with wild delight. Here were *three* pliable freshmen ready for molding, and with purses sufficiently well filled to pay without questioning the price she named for her four rooms. It was considerably more than she had ever dared name before, but did not seem exorbitant to Mr. and Mrs. Percy, coming from a large city where such prices were usual. Thirty dollars each week meant no end of new pictures, cabinets, bric-à-brac, and what not? True, she provided well for her boarders, for she was fond of good things herself, and did not mean to be stinted, but her own income could look out for that end of the domestic economy



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and the weekly income from her girls do marvels if wisely expended.

"Sophomores and seniors know too much," she confided to Maggie, "but freshmen can be handled."

She was beginning to learn, however, that some freshmen can not be.

Grace Houghton was standing by her open window one afternoon brushing a heavy cloth skirt when there came the familiar peremptory "tat-a-tat-tat" at her door. The girls had grown to dread that rap, and to understand that it meant, "Stand to your guns!" They had heard it when they were busy hanging their pictures, and Mrs. Ward had not waited for them to bid her enter, but had bounced in upon them to demand that they show her what kind of nails they were using. Grace Percy advanced toward her with a handful of picture hooks and asked if these were the sort she herself used.

They heard it another time when they left their shades raised, and their reading-lamp was lighted. Madam was returning from an errand

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down town, and espied the raised shades as she came in. She hurried up to their study, and, when bidden enter, rushed across the room, and pulled down the shades with the announcement:

"I don't like the neighbors lookin' into my house. I was born and brought up in a city."

It was a beautiful night, and the moment she left their study, Grace Houghton walked over to the windows and ran *all* the shades to the very top.

That tap had come another evening when their raised shades revealed to their landlady two burners of the chandelier lighted. The girls were expecting some friends, and a spread was laid. Mrs. Ward did not even wait to be bidden enter upon that occasion, and was too intent upon the gas-burners to notice the spread at first.

"Now, girls, *one* gas-burner lighted is plenty," she cried, as she turned out a light; then, catching sight of the feast, she exclaimed, "And *do* be careful of the carpet! I have *never* allowed my girls to have things in their rooms. Here, let me take off that cover before it's ruined."

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She pounced upon the dish of fudge, and was about to take up something else, when Grace Langford laid her pretty hand upon the handsome lunch cloth which covered their reading-table, and said quietly:

"This cloth belongs to me, Mrs. Ward; behold the monogram. And may I ask the rates charged by the gas companies of this town?"

Mrs. Ward looked somewhat nonplussed, but answered:

"They charge *a dollar and a quarter a thousand feet*, and it's perfectly outrageous, too! Why, in Brooklyn——"

"I'm not interested in the Brooklyn gas rates, Mrs. Ward," Grace broke in softly, "but can you tell me about how much gas you consume each month?"

"Yes, indeed, I can! My last month's bill was *six dollars!*"

"That means about one dollar and a half each week, or a little over twenty cents each night, doesn't it? Our lights will be out at eleven at the latest, and I think this ought to cover the ex-

## THE EVANS HOUSE DRAMATICS

pense, don't you?" asked Grace, as she drew a half dollar from the little silver chatelaine bag at her side and offered it to Mrs. Ward.

But that lady was beginning to waken to the situation, and to realize that she had ventured too far with this quiet little Southern girl.

"Oh, nonsense!" she cried. "What an idea! Of course, you can use all the light you *need*. I was only joking."

"Really?" queried Grace sweetly. "Do you know, Mrs. Ward, I don't reckon I quite understand you at times."

And now came that ominous tap again.

"Well, what is up now, I wonder?" was Grace's mental query as she paused in her brushing. The other Graces had gone down to the Gym to watch the preparations for the Evans House dramatics, for the "Taming of the Shrew" was to be given soon, and rehearsals were in full swing. She had been detained by some work which had tired her a good bit, and was somewhat irritable as the result, and in no mood to be fussed at by Mrs. Ward.

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"Come in," she called, and a be-crimping-pinned head, followed by a body in a pink kimona, far from fresh, appeared in the doorway.

"I was just goin' down-stairs when I heard you brushing your clothes, so I stopped to ask if you would mind carrying them down to the back garden to brush them there. I don't like to have people brush their clothes in my house; the dust ruins the curtains and furniture."

Grace Houghton listened in amazement. Hitherto her temper had been pretty well corked up, and the cork pressed down hard, for both Grace Percy and Grace Langford had helped press, each realizing that Grace was really struggling to overcome her evil genius, and wishing to help all they could. There had been many little irritations of this sort to meet in Mrs. Ward's home. After all, it is the little ones which most try us, for we can up and do battle with the big ones and still retain our own self-respect and dignity, whereas the mosquito stings drive us nearly wild, and yet we can not cry at the mosquitoes, "You're another," without in-

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stantly appearing idiotic. The Graces were not on hand to fill the breach, so Grace had to do battle herself, and she did it with a will. She entered the fray with such a rush that Mrs. Ward nearly fell backward down-stairs.

“Go down into your garden to brush my skirt, Mrs. Ward?” she demanded, advancing toward that astonished lady with her skirt in one hand and her whisk-broom in the other. “Plant myself in the middle of your grass-plot, and flourish my whisk-broom for the benefit of the entire community? What do you take me for? What sort of girls do you think you have taken into your home, anyway? A lot of silly school-girls whom you can order about like sheep? I think you must have lost your senses. There are some things which you are entirely at liberty to say to us, and a good many more which you are not, and the sooner you learn to discriminate, the better it will be for all of us. All of us girls are accustomed to living in well-appointed homes, and taking proper care of whatever is in them, and we expect to do so in yours. We are grow-

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ing deadly weary of this incessant surveillance, and I tell you right now, that if you continue it we shall have to seek quarters elsewhere. I, for one, have spoken for the first and last time, and I assure you that if you presume to dictate to me again in this manner I shall leave your house without an hour's notice. And now, may I beg of you to leave my room? Good afternoon!"

The thunderbolt had fallen. The door was whisked together much more quickly than it had been opened, and Grace stood glaring at it like a little fury. She was thoroughly aroused, and much of the old spirit of rebellion was stirred within her. Five minutes later that skirt was brushed, and the young lady was in it, and striding down the hill toward the Gym at a rate difficult to equal. When she arrived there confusion reigned, and the girls were all talking at once as they sorted over properties and endeavored to get things started.

Most of the cast had been fully settled, and the girls were already hard at work upon their several parts, but consternation now reigned, for

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Gay Whiteley had just come rushing in to announce:

“Girls, we *are* in a fix! Maude Lawrence has just received a telegram calling her home to her father, who is dangerously ill. Now, *who’ll* be Katharine?”

A clamor arose, and a number of girls were suggested, but each promptly declined the honor on the score of insufficient time to learn a new rôle, even the understudy vowing that she simply would *not* undertake it.

“It is one thing to understudy a part, and quite another to shoulder the whole show, let me tell you. So long as I felt that Maude was here to do the starring, I was all right, and didn’t mind following up, even if I’d been obliged to bob up in an emergency and help out. But I’d never come through the ordeal alive if I had to do it all. I’d faint in the middle of the performance.”

“Fiddlesticks! If you don’t do it, who will? I don’t mean faint—act?”

As though the question had been answered for



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her by fate, Grace Houghton just then came through the door, her face still a thunder-cloud, and her eyes yet blazing from her recent encounter. Grace Percy and Grace Langford, who were seated upon a green excelsior terrace at the other side of the stage, exchanged rapid glances, for they dreaded to see that expression upon Grace's face, and it had been a long time since they had. Grace Percy started up to meet the girl, but before she could cross the space which divided them, a senior cried:

"Was there *ever* such a Katharine!"

And, indeed, no outraged Katharine had ever stalked across a stage with a more dramatic carriage than Grace was sweeping across the stage of the Gym. Suddenly she paused, her expression changed swiftly, as though she were recollecting herself, and she asked:

"What did you say, Miss Horner?"

"Have you ever acted?" demanded the leader of the Evans House Dramatic Club.

"Sometimes," replied Grace, a funny little smile curling her lips, and causing her eyes to

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twinkle at thoughts of the scenes of her "acting."

"Did you do that purposely?"

"Do what purposely, Miss Horner?" asked Grace, bewildered.

"Didn't you hear what we were saying as you came in?"

"Not a word."

"Then *how* did you manage to assume that character so instantly and so perfectly?"

Grace burst out laughing.

"I truly don't know what you are talking about. I didn't assume *any* character. I was so blazing angry when I came through that door that I believe I could have eaten nails and relished them. But I'm restored now, I think. So tell me what you mean."

"'Katharine' has to go home because her father (not Baptista, by the way, but Mr. Lawrence) is ill, and we're in a sweet fix. Not a girl will undertake the character, and if we fizzle on *this* play, after all our talk about the tremendous things we're going to do, we'll never hear the last

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of it. The minute I saw you I thought you must have heard what we were saying, and that you had instantly decided to give us a most convincing proof of your histrionic talents, and you fairly took my breath away. Now tell me truly what you know of the character," said Carol Horner, settling down to business in earnest.

"I am quite familiar with it," answered Grace, a sudden shyness overcoming her in the presence of this dignified senior, whose word carried no little weight in the college.

"Have you ever really studied or acted the part?"

"Yes."

"Where and with whom?"

"In all sorts of places, and under all manner of conditions. Principally on an island in Lake Ontario, and with a student of Shakespeare who helped me love and understand the character."

"On an island in Lake Ontario!" echoed Miss Horner. "Did you have a stage, or settings, or anything to help you?"

"Only the stage which nature provided, and

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the trees for scenery," answered Grace, a softer expression stealing over her face at the recollection of those happy hours with Mr. Percy.

"How much of the part do you remember?" continued her questioner.

"I don't think I have forgotten any of it," replied Grace.

"What! You know the whole thing, truly? Could you give portions of it right now for me? Will you try? I know it would smash all laws, rules, and traditions to little bits, but I believe you'd make the finest Katharine the Evans House ever had. Will you try?"

Would she try? A freshman to be chosen for such a part in the Evans House play. And how well she knew every line and every scene of that play! Ten minutes later an impromptu rehearsal was in full swing, and Grace as the capricious Katharine was drawing the wildest applause from her enthusiastic audience

## CHAPTER V

### DANIEL MORFORD ARRIVES FOR THE TWENTY-SECOND

"THE Taming of the Shrew" proved a great success. Katharine was irresistible, and called forth much favorable comment. The fact that the character was taken by a freshman excited no little surprise and conjecture. "Girls, I tell you what it is," cried the president of the Senior Dramatic Club, as she watched Grace's acting, "we must have that girl sooner or later. Why, she's a perfect *wonder*! There has never been such a Katharine as that in all the four years I've been here. We've simply *got* to get her!"

"Better hurry up then, Phyllis, for your time is growing short. Don't see exactly how you're going to manage it, myself, but I dare say you do," was another senior's rejoinder.

"It won't be *us*, of course, but the Club must

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have her, and they will make the mistake of their lives if they don't take her in the very first second they can."

Grace certainly had done wonderfully well for a girl of her years. She gave full rein to her love for acting, and plunged heart and soul into the character. For the first time in her life she had found an opportunity to give free expression to her talent, and stage, audience, and everything else were utterly forgotten as she impersonated the capricious Katharine, whom, in very truth, she resembled in many respects.

Hitherto, with the exception of her wild flight to New York from Laurel Hill, and her absurd recitations and acting for Miss R——'s benefit, she had found no opportunity to prove what really was hidden beneath that strange character of hers. There had been no outlet for her power to impersonate the characters which she really loved, but was at a loss to make others understand why her love existed, or the power it held over her. Those with whom she had been thrown seemed to be blind to it and too dull to guess the

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tremendous influence it was bound to exercise in the development of her character if wisely guided. They had discouraged anything of the kind from the mistaken idea that want of encouragement would kill the desire, little realizing that in such a nature as Grace's this very repression would act as a stimulant by forcing her to live it all within self. Even Miss Emerson, who came nearer to understanding Grace than any of her previous instructors had ever come, hesitated to encourage her fondness for dramatics, and never allowed her to take part in any of the little school plays, lest a taste for amateur acting fire her with an uncontrollable desire for more ambitious flights.

Had this girl been more thoroughly understood earlier in life, and more wisely guided, all this bottled-up energy, this suppressed force, this frantic desire to be something she was not, might have been turned into perfectly safe channels, and the very love for dramatic impersonation been used to splendid purpose. But not until she became an inmate of the Percy family was the

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truth of all this turned to her profit. It was Mr. Percy who came to Grace's rescue, and discovered what others had failed to learn. Knowing his Shakespeare from cover to cover, and loving the characters as close friends, he was not long in awakening to the fact that he could not begin a quotation from one of the plays which Grace was not quite capable of completing.

Thrown from her infancy with a frivolous mother, who simply knew Shakespeare as "One of those men who lived ever so long ago, and wrote things," and who went to a theater, not to see, but to be seen; not to listen, but to be heard; and who neither knew nor cared to learn the difference between tragedy and comedy, if they amused her for the time being, it was no wonder that Grace's natural fondness for really good literature found nothing to feed upon until she grew old enough to choose for herself. Then, as was to be expected, the pendulum swung to the opposite extreme, and she plunged into a very whirlpool of reading, and, unsuspected by others, acting, too. Could the walls of some of the bed-



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rooms of the various boarding-schools of which she had been an inmate from the moment she was old enough to be sent to a school, have spoken, they would have told some strangely pathetic little tales.

During the weeks passed in Canada, Grace had tasted her first sips of bliss, for many a delightful hour had she passed with Mr. Percy upon some wooded island reading and reciting with him. He was by no means blind to the chaos which prevailed, and patiently set about evolving order. The plays Grace loved so well were taken bit by bit, talked over, and studied, one character at a time being analyzed and acted, instead of half a dozen with lightning transformation effects, for the poor child had been in the habit of assuming many rôles in private, and was as liable to be Olivia, Viola, Sebastian, Malvolio, and Sir Toby within five minutes as she was to strive for perfection in any one. The little vessel was sadly in need of a compass, and Mr. Percy proved both compass and safety-valve. The character of Katharine had always been one of

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Grace's favorites, perhaps because she was most in sympathy with that capricious lady, and Mr. Percy encouraged her to study it, possibly feeling that, as in homeopathic treatment, like would cure like. Many a hearty laugh had come floating across the water from some lovely little wooded island that summer as Mr. Percy, resting against a friendly old tree trunk, enjoyed Grace's recitations and acting. She seemed to entirely forget his presence as well as her surroundings, and live for the time being in the character she impersonated.

Those readings and bits of acting now stood her in good stead, and the Evans House girls showered her with posies and praises most impartially. Her first step was taken for her future, although she little suspected it then.

Next came the Christmas holidays, and the girls scattered broadcast for a time. The Graces spent a happy holiday at Mr. Percy's home, with Adelaide and Isabel to help them make merry, and Daniel Morford to keep them in gales of laughter with his drollery for he seemed to re-

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gard himself in the light of a wise elderly brother who could watch out and lecture them to his heart's content. It was a truly happy holiday for all of them.

"You'll surely come up for the dance, won't you, Mr. Morford?" begged the girls as they were bidding him good-by in the train at the Grand Central station.

"And you'll come as *my* guest, won't you?" said Grace Langford.

"What good is a fellow for a dance if his legs haven't got a dancing kink to 'em?" he demanded.

"You don't need much of a dancing kink for that frolic," Grace Houghton assured him.

"Go take a few lessons, just for sweet friendship's sake," said Grace Percy hurriedly, for the signal had been given, and "All aboard" called out.

Daniel Morford caught his hat from his head, gave it a wild flourish, which included all three in a farewell, and called over his shoulder as he hurried from the car:

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"I will, by gum!"

Mrs. Ward greeted them most effusively upon their arrival at 17 Willow Road, and favored them with a detailed account of "Buddie" and his visit, how delighted Darling had been to see the dear boy, and numerous other valuable bits of information concerning that shining light.

"And you'll have a chance to meet him when he comes here for the dance, for Miss Bedford has invited him to escort her. Funny you girls never thought of him, isn't it?"

As Mrs. Ward's back was toward them when she gave this shot the girls managed to stifle their laughter.

Then the days fled fast, each one filled with its duties and its pleasures, until, almost before they realized where the time had gone, the twenty-first arrived, and with it Daniel Morford.

"Got my traps and togs all down at the hotel," he announced, after greeting them in Mrs. Ward's immaculate parlor, where a truly resplendent Louis XIV gilded cabinet had appeared since the Christmas holidays, and which

### THREE GRACES AT COLLEGE

now held all Mrs. Ward's after-dinner coffee-spoons carefully displayed for the admiration of her friends, although it sadly depleted her supply for the dining-room. But that lack was supplied from her larger tea-spoons, which constantly invited disaster by threatening to overturn the tiny cups in which they were used. However, *some* risk must be incurred in whatever we do.

"And are you past master of all the square dances, and a few round ones as well?" asked Grace Percy, when they had settled down to a steady flow of questions and answers.

"Guess I'll pull through if the other fellow will only keep to the right," was the confident answer.

"What round dances did you learn?" demanded Grace Langford.

Daniel Morford looked quizzically at the little figure reclining so gracefully in one of Mrs. Ward's most cherished gilt chairs, and replied:

"Got the hang of the two-step all right, but somehow the waltz stumped me. Guess I'd get it

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all right if they'd only give a fellow time, but they play so tarnal fast that I can't keep track of my legs. While I'm thinking what to do with my right one the left one cuts loose and goes off on its own hook."

"I could make you do it properly, I know I could! Will you try with me right now? Go play a waltz for us, Grace H., and play *slowly*," cried Grace Langford.

Grace went over to the piano, raised the lid, and began The Palms from Florodora.

"There! Keep just that time and we'll do splendidly, see if we don't," exclaimed Grace, pushing the treasured chairs close to the walls and standing the little spider-legged tables out of harm's way. Then, catching up the train of her gown, she rested her arm upon Daniel Morford's shoulder, clasped his hand gently but firmly in hers, and the dance was on. Grace Percy retired to a safe corner to watch proceedings. Mrs. Ward had gone with "Buddie" to call upon the gracious Miss Bedford, and for the time being the coast was clear

### THREE GRACES AT COLLEGE

Up and down the room swayed the dancers, Daniel Morford developing wonderfully under fairy-like Grace's instruction, and Grace Houghton's emphasized time. The moments slipped away unnoticed.

"I say, little girl, that's all right! You're great. Why, I've learned more in ten minutes with you than I'd learn in two hours with old Professor Tigwizzle down in New York. It takes a girl to make a fellow's toes keep time, and don't you forget it. Come on, Grace, and have a turn with me. Let's see if I can do as well with you. From all I hear they won't let a fellow dance twice with the same girl down yonder, so I'd better practise while I've got the chance."

"If Mrs. Ward should come in and catch us, we'd all dance to another tune, I fancy," remarked Grace Percy, as she came from her corner and prepared to do her share toward instructing.

"I don't reckon Mrs. Ward will put in her appearance before eleven o'clock; she's too busy

## DANIEL MORFORD ARRIVES

parading the dear Buddie before Miss Bedford's admiring eyes. I wonder if 'admiring' is the right word, though? Go on, Grace."

Grace Houghton struck into another waltz, saying as she did so:

"It isn't wise to dance to the same tune all the time; you need variety." Around and around, thither and yonder, went Grace and Daniel Morford—Grace Langford curled up like a little Turk on Mrs. Ward's divan in the "cosy corner," at which one might not point and live to tell of it, and beating time like one of the pick-aninnies at home.

In order to emphasize the time more, Grace Houghton had burst into song, and the hilarious ragtime rang through the room, completely drowning the sound of a latch-key placed in the front door.

"There's a time in the year  
Which we all hold most dear,"

sang Grace at the top of her voice, when—

"Wow-wow-wow!!! Snarl! Snap!" joined in, accompanied by the dismayed shriek of—



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"Oh! oh! My Wilton! My Wilton! My rococo! My rococo! Stop them! Stop them! Buddie! Buddie! Darling! Darling!" interrupted the music.

"Now-er, well-er, why-er—" began the deliberate Buddie. But Darling was of different stuff, and the next thing Daniel Morford knew a set of sharp teeth were firmly embedded in the leg of his trousers, literally missing the calf by a scratch.

But this young man was not of the sort who yield meekly to a trying situation, and the next thing Darling knew he was pounced upon from the rear, a violent twist given to his crooked tail, which instantly acted upon his mouth, causing it to fly open to emit a wild howl of protest at treatment the like of which he never before had known.

Then Darling rose to heights never dreamed possible by him or his doting mistress, for with the command:

"Stand out of the way!" Daniel Morford strode across the room and out into the hall,





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with the dog dangling, wriggling, and yelping at arm's length. Flinging open the front door, he gave his strong right arm a long swing, and sent his assailant spinning through the air, to land and vanish in a snow-bank, there to cool off his overheated zeal.

He then returned to the parlor to find Mrs. Ward nearly in hysterics, and have her demand tragically:

"What *have* you done with my precious baby, you dreadful, *dreadful* man?"

"Which one?" asked Daniel, innocently, for Buddie had vanished.

"How could you so misuse my home, my furniture, and so abuse my house in my absence? How——?"

"Now, see here, Mrs. Ward, suppose we come down to facts and common sense for just five minutes? Maybe the change will prove beneficial. No one has misused or abused anything belonging to you, and, what's more, no one is going to either. The only misuse seems to have come from that fool-dog of yours and he

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cracky! if you don't take care, there will be no further chance for him to misuse anybody. The dog, if it's *that* baby you mean, isn't hurt a mite—yet. Neither am I, but that isn't his fault. What is likely to happen next remains to be seen. Guess it depends a good deal upon him. The girls will put the chairs and tables just where they found them, and poke up those pillows yonder, too. I'll stay right here and see 'em do it. Then when I get ready I'll go, and—if they hear any further fuss about this harmless fun, so will they."

Half an hour later the girls bade him good-by. As they opened the door to let him out, a shivering, soaked animal, his tail at half-mast, scuttled through it, and vanished beneath the portière at the end of the hall.

## CHAPTER VI

### BASKET-BALL

"Now, I'd like to know if that's not simply overpowering? Did ever mortal creature see it outdone by nature or art?" demanded Grace Langford, holding up for the admiration of a dozen other girls a crêpe paper violet nearly as big as a bushel basket.

"If size goes for anything it certainly ought to make an impression upon the assembly, but, oh, girls, *can* we hope to win? When I think of all those sophs, and their achievements last year, and then cast my eyes over *our* girls, I tremble," said Bess Clifton, the captain of the basket-ball team, falling back upon the piled-up cushions of the couch.

"How *dare* you, Bess, when you lead us?" cried Grace Percy. "Do you want to soak our enthusiasm at the very outset? When --"

### THREE GRACES AT COLLEGE

a streak of lightning yourself! Just exactly like one. I defy *any one* to corner you, and Bobby Shafto is a far better guard than the soph's."

Bess glanced sidewise out of her mischievous brown eyes, wrinkled her small nose, and pursed up her cupid's bow mouth.

"I thought *that* would stir you all up. Nothing like casting a bomb into one's inner circle, so to speak, to arouse a discussion. Do you suppose I don't know how to value our team? Girls, we're going to win! Now—

"Here's to Naughty-three,  
Fling her violet banner free!  
For defeat she can not see!  
Drink her down, down, down!"

The rooms rang, and from below came a muffled "Wow-wow-wow!" Then some one was heard to rapidly ascend the stairs, footsteps pattered along the hall, paused a moment outside the closed door, and then passed on. Grace Houghton's eyes had begun to snap, but Aphrodite had learned her limitations.

## BASKET-BALL

The girls were preparing for the basket-ball game which would take place the following week. They had gathered in the Graces' study, which was a sort of rendezvous for many of the freshman class, as well as others, for the Graces had made their way during the year and were holding their own. The study was strewn from end to end with fragments of violet crêpe paper, cheese-cloth, and bunting, for the girls were all at work upon the decorations for the Gym, meanwhile such of them as were not under training for the game were fortifying themselves with fudge which Grace Houghton, a past mistress in the art of making, had provided. Shrieks of laughter had assailed Mrs. Ward's ears, and disturbed the repose of her pet, but they had both learned not to intrude unnecessarily.

"Girls, what *are* we to have for a mascot? I know those sophs have something remarkable, for I caught Clarissa Baldwin down-town the other day buying a huge bunch of pink pampas-grass. I asked her what she was going to do with



### THREE GRACES AT COLLEGE

her feathers, and she answered that she'd tell me on the nineteenth. Now, we've *got* to go just one point beyond these girls, no matter what that point may be," said Bess, as she held a violet shield at arm's length to admire the monstrous '03 she had fastened upon it.

"Make Grace Langford think up a mascot; she's the original one among us," cried Grace Houghton.

"Me, honey! I never had a bright idea in my life. I'd want a full month——"

Just then the doleful wail of "V-i-o-l-e-t-s, sweet vi-o-lets," arose beneath the window, and turning quickly to the direction from which the wail proceeded, the girls beheld in front of the window a huddled, shivering, little figure, which grinned and nodded, jerked its queer little hat from its head, then clapped it back again, to cast furtive glances behind, as though dreading an assault from that quarter.

Grace Langford was the first to reach the window, and as she flung up the sash, she cried, "Girls, your mascot stands before you!"

## BASKET-BALL

"What did I tell you?" was Grace Houghton's triumphant cry.

The next moment a forlorn little monkey was regaling itself upon a banana, while his master beneath the window gathered in a rich store of pennies.

"Grace, fly down and strike a bargain with that man, quick!" screamed Bess. "Offer him *anything* to stay in this town until the nineteenth, and we'll pay it if we all have to go broke for a month to follow." Grace fled.

Where that week slipped to the girls could not understand, and before they realized what had happened they found themselves in the big Gym, their hearts thrilling at sight of the decorations; one-half of them violet, the other half pale pink. The big crêpe paper violets and shields with their green numerals flaunted defiance at the pink roses and pink shields opposite. Duck-clad seniors, with coquettish pink bows in their hair, and a pink rose at their throats, moved serenely through the crowd which was thronging and overflowing every part of the building. Juniors

### THREE GRACES AT COLLEGE

in fly-away paper caps and bunches of violets seemed to be everywhere at once.

"Now, girls, listen to me," said Bess. "We've got our hands full, and we all know it. Keep your eyes open, your mouths shut, and your wits handy; you'll need all you've got. Look out for Madge Harding! That girl is possessed of supernatural powers, and can be in twenty places at once. Grace, you're going to be our salvation, for you're taller than any of us."

Just then a coach came to the door. "Send out your subs. It is nearly time to begin," she said.

The sub team trotted out to a freshman song sung with spirit, and took their places upon the platform which was directly opposite the sophomore subs.

"All hail! All hail, our violet Naughty-three!  
All hail! All hail, it beaten can not be!  
The violet's bound to conquer,  
As all will surely see,  
So, hail, all hail, to our Freshmen!"

The rafters trembled with the vibration, and the audience went nearly wild. The president

## BASKET-BALL

smiled indulgently upon all. Then followed a wild shout of applause as the sophomores escorted to the middle of the floor a most astonishing, long-legged, long-necked, crook-beaked, pink bird. Directly they had placed the creature they fell back to await developments.

The bird raised first one foot, extended the claws, wriggled them a little, then replaced the foot upon the floor, to repeat the operation with the other foot; stretched its neck to its fullest extent, turned its head this way and that, as though taking its bearings, raised its wings, and flapped them as if about to take flight, but suddenly changed its mind, and let them drop again. Then it gave a wild flourish to a tail the like of which never grew upon one of its kind.

In the silence which expectancy produced some one was heard to ask:

"Where in the world did they find such a specimen of ornithology as that?"

"It was sent to Professor Latimer, and they wheedled him into letting them have it. Hush, something's going to happen."

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Something did happen. The bird, evidently deciding that he had been posing long enough, again stretched his neck, raised his wings, and giving a wild, squawking cry, arose majestically into space, to sail straight over the heads of the audience, and roost upon one of the great beams overhead. But, alas for the superb tail! Its fastenings were none too secure, and as the creature's exertions increased, the strings gave way to let a dozen or more pink pampas-grass plumes flutter upon the upturned faces beneath.

As the applause subsided, the freshmen burst into song to the tune of "Violets, sweet violets," substituting:

"Violet, our violet; to which we are stanch and true!"

Then out upon the floor walked their accompanist, the hand-organ man, transformed into a truly superb creature. Violet hose and violet knee-breeches; violet shoes with silver buckles; flowing violet cloak flung jauntily over his shoulder, as only an Italian can throw a cloak; a huge violet "Rubens" hat with swaying plume, rak-

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ishly tilted upon his raven locks. The organ was resplendent in violet and gold paint, and the monkey the most resplendent of all. Grace Langford had taken *him* in hand, and hours had she spent upon that monkey's satin suit. Grace declared that if it had not been for that suit, which she assured the monkey's owner would become his property, together with the other elegant trappings, directly the performance was over, they would never in the world have been able to keep the man in Ardwell until the nineteenth. But keep him they did, and find a place for him and his monkey to stay, too, and never before had he dwelt in such luxury, or the monkey's life been one of such bliss, as during that week.

And that monkey was a genius, and possessed of intuitions which cast human intuition into the shade. His chain had been discarded for the time being, and a beautiful silken cord was all that held him within bounds. Although accustomed to seeing people, he was not prepared for such a gathering as this. and as the freshmen's mascot

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prepared to bow himself from the scene with truly Latin flourishes, smiles, and grace, the monkey embraced the opportunity to bite his silken cord and flee. Across the floor, over the laps of the spectators, only pausing long enough to snatch a violet banner from a startled freshman, and rush straight for the platform, where he clambered to a position of vantage upon the back of the president's chair, and waved, chattered, and scolded like a small demon until captured, and sent upon his way with a shining silver piece clasped tightly in his small human-like hand.

Then the game was on! Those of you who know basket-ball well know what this one meant. In, out, thither, yonder! Now the advantage upon one side, now on the other, until wild confusion reigned, and voices yelled:

“Rah! Rah! Rah! Naughty-three! Naughty-t-h-r-e-e-e!”

Then the freshmen realized that the game was theirs.

Hands were shaken, hugs given, and the violet



The Freshmen realized that the game was theirs





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banner waved in the wind created by the enthusiastic cheers, as :

“All hail! All hail! Our violet Naughty-three!” etc., resounded again and again through the building.

## CHAPTER VII

### DECORATION DAY

EASTER had come and gone, and beautiful spring term begun. Tennis practise for the tournament made cheeks glow and eyes sparkle. Grace Percy had always loved the game, and, like most English girls, played exceedingly well. So it was not surprising that being upheld by two such enthusiasts as Grace and Alice Kingsley the violet banner should carry off the prize of championship, and the class of 1903 should go nearly frantic with delight.

Then capricious April glided into May and Decoration Day turned the whole college loose.

"Honey, do you know what I mean to do next Wednesday?" asked Grace Langford, as she entered the cool, pleasant study one afternoon, and

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dropped herself and an armful of books upon the couch.

"Stand on a corner down-town and distribute flags to all the juveniles in Ardwell," answered Grace Percy, pouring a glass of icy lemonade and handing it to Grace, for the day was a warm one, and the climb up that long hill far from cooling.

"How tame! She's going to get Smithson's barge and take us all to the top of Mount Hope on a royal picnic," was Grace Houghton's venture.

"Grace, you're a mind-reader! How did you come so near to it? No, it isn't the barge this time, but the splendid new automobile he has just bought and will rent to his pet customers. I've been to see him about it. Stopped on my way home."

"An auto!" cried both the girls. "Why, Grace, what do *you* know about an auto? We'd all have our necks broken!"

Grace leaned back among her cushions, raised her eyebrows, sipped her lemonade leisurely, and

### THREE GRACES AT COLLEGE

—let them wait for her answer. One pounced upon her and bore away the lemonade; the other shook her and demanded:

“What *do* you mean?”

“Just exactly what I say. I’ve used father’s auto hundreds of times, and still live to tell of it. This one is the same make, only very much larger, and eight of us can get into it, if we don’t mind crowding a little, and have a high old time on the thirtieth. I even went a few blocks this afternoon with Père Smithson in order to convince him that I *did* know how to handle the thing, and he said he ‘cal’lated I was wuth a hull team and a four-in-hand thrown in.’ Now what greater commendation do you want than *that*, you skeptics? Will you join the party?”

“Which other girls are going?” asked Grace Percy.

“Alice Kingsley, Gay Whiteley, Bess Clifton, Madge Harding, and Clarissa Baldwin. At least, I’m going to *ask* them. Maybe they’ll show an abiding faith in me and maybe they won’t—that remains to be seen.”

## DECORATION DAY

"What will Smithson charge for the day?" asked Grace Percy.

"He says he wants fifteen dollars," replied Grace, in a rather doubtful tone, as if this was the only weak point in her argument.

"That would be one dollar and eighty-seven cents for each of us, Grace, and I'm afraid we can't all stand it," was Grace Percy's prudent comment, for she had not always been able to share in the good times other girls were having, and it made her thoughtful for her less fortunate sisters.

"I know; I've thought all that out, and mean to fix it this way. You know father sent me ten dollars and told me to celebrate with it, and include some of my friends also. So I'm going to ask each girl to pay a dollar and I'll do the rest, and provide the luncheon. That's all fair and square, isn't it?"

"Why, yes, it's more than fair, but I wonder if the girls will want to accept it?"

"Nonsense! It's my treat partly, and they've all been lovely to me in loads of ways. They

### THREE GRACES AT COLLEGE

have no reason to feel under the slightest obligation, I'm sure. Anyway, I'm going on this frolic if I can get them to go with me."

"You may count on me!" cried Grace Houghton, for this fly-away project appealed to her.

The thirtieth of May dawned perfectly. At ten o'clock the girls who were to make up the picnic party assembled at Mrs. Ward's, and the resplendent red automobile arrived punctually to the minute. Mr. Smithson himself escorted his snorting machine to the door, and saw the girls and their luncheon boxes carefully packed into it.

"I'd be a bit careful on them hills, miss. She's in prime condition, but *them* hills hereabouts is enough to make *any* machine kick. Mind yer emergency brake, though, and ye're safe enough on *any* hill."

"Oh, I'll be prudence itself," answered Grace, as she took the chauffeur's seat and began adjusting her levers like an old hand at the business. "You ought to see *our* hills at home, Mr. Smithson, if you think these are so start-

## DECORATION DAY

ling. Father always says that he would rather have me use his auto than any one else; I'm so cautious."

"Well, ye've got a *pretty good load aboard*," ventured Mr. Smithson, as the machine moved gently off.

"The insulting creature!" cried Grace with mock indignation. "Does he mean to insinuate that it has made me tipsy to look at our bottles of lemon soda?"

Never had the village of Ardwell looked so beautiful, and never had eight girls created a greater sensation among its youthful population than those in the big red auto as they bowled along its quiet streets and out into the charming country beyond. Hurrahs and cheers followed them as one small boy after another ran in the dust of their wake.

"Now, isn't this just about right, girls?" demanded Grace, when at length the town was left far behind them, and she had let her puffing machine out another notch.

"I'm having the time of my life!" cried Bess



### THREE GRACES AT COLLEGE

“and I *must* give vent to my feelings. Sing, girls, sing!”

Out upon the soft morning air rang the merry strains of Mandalay, to go floating away across the quiet fields and cause four or five sedate cows to raise their heads from a feast of lush grasses, wag their ears once or twice, and moo an approving echo after the rapidly disappearing vehicle.

Then came the long, gentle ascent of Mount Hope, with its constantly broadening panorama of fairy-like scenery far below. By noon the summit was reached, and the girls scrambled out, removed their luncheon boxes, and prepared to feast. Can potted ham, pressed chicken, stuffed eggs, crisp lettuce sandwiches, olives, pickles, and Heaven knows what not besides, ever again taste as they do when we are eighteen or twenty? Can air ever seem so brimful of oxygen, the skies so deliciously blue, or all nature so in harmony with us? Light hearts and merry souls help the time to fly, so was it any wonder that four o'clock stole upon the picnic party

## DECORATION DAY

before they could guess where the hours had gone? They started upon their homeward journey, leaving the great mountain to its sunshine and its silence. As the sounds of the puffing machine died away, curious little wood-folk and the birds came to inspect the remnants of the feast.

Grace handled her machine very cautiously as she wound down the first steep descent of the mountain, and it must be confessed that some of the girls peered over the sides of the vehicle with more or less apprehension in their faces. But all went well. They rolled steadily down, down, down, and presently the road made a long, level sweep for more than a mile.

"Wasn't that fine?" said Grace, as the auto ran out upon the smooth, straight road. "*Now* the only really dangerous part is passed, and the other descents are not worth mentioning. Let's have a spin here. It's too splendid a bit of road to let pass without taking advantage of it. GO!" and off darted the machine at her touch.

"Don't break *all* our necks, Grace," implored

### THREE GRACES AT COLLEGE

Gay Whiteley. "Remember, I'm packed in here pretty tightly, and if one goes all will follow."

"Don't you worry! We are as safe as can be, and, oh, isn't it perfectly thrilling!"

On they sped faster and faster; the trees and bushes whisking away behind them. Not a living thing was in sight, and all the world and all the road seemed theirs. About a quarter of a mile ahead on the left side of the road could be seen an old, weather-beaten barn, as inoffensive a looking object as one could picture. At the rate at which they were traveling the quarter of a mile was speedily reduced to an eighth, and the eighth to a sixteenth. A high locust hedge shut off their view of the fields to the right of the road, and effectually prevented them from discovering what was taking place just at that point.

"Do slow up a little, Grace," begged one of the girls, for a decidedly reckless light had sprung into their dainty chauffeur's eyes, and her small hands held within their grasp all that stood between eight girls and disaster.

## DECORATION DAY

"In just a minute. Wait until we get past this old, ramshackle barn. We must go by with a hoorah, for there's the patriarchal owner gaping at us open-mouthed, as though he meant to swallow the whole turnout," laughed Grace, glancing in the direction of the barn. At that instant the man threw up both arms and yelled:

"Hi, there! Look out for Daisy! She's a-comin'!" And Daisy came!

The next thing the girls knew cows seemed to fill all the air, and the auto had gone raving mad. Daisy was not a creature to give way, and the herd of twelve or fifteen sleek kine, which for many moons had acknowledged her as their leader, were bound to follow wherever she led. So when their pasture bars were lowered, of course, they rushed from the field, across the road, and straight for bed and board. Grace certainly had her hoorah, for the lightning rapidity with which that auto whizzed about and made for the barn door, plowing its way through bel-lowing cows snawking poultry. and barking

### THREE GRACES AT COLLEGE

dogs, and starting the owner of the premises at top speed for the farther end of his domains, beggars description.

Grace held on for dear life, and did her best to check her steed's wild career, but it is one thing to conduct an automobile safely along a broad, clear highway, and quite another to guide it successfully through a barn door in which several distracted cows are disputing entrance. But the animals were assisted upon their way by merciless bumps and thumps from the rear which sent them mooing and bellowing over the barn floor and tearing through the big open door at the other end of the barn, out of which the runaway auto would, no doubt, have followed them had not Grace Houghton suddenly caught hold of Grace Langford's arm, thus giving the steering apparatus a sharp turn, which brought the machine bang against a horse's stall, causing the animal to give a wild snort, a jerk which broke his halter rope, and landed him upon his haunches.

Then the girls simply spilled out in heaps and

## DECORATION DAY

piles upon the hay with which the barn floor was littered.

"I *told* you I could manage it, and stop it all right!" cried Grace, scrambling to her feet, disheveled but undaunted.

"My Lord-a-massy!" exclaimed a frightened voice from the back door. "Be you girls all killed outright with that tarnal thing? I wouldn't ride in one o' them gol-twisted consarns not fer nothin' on airth. Blessed if I would. Here, let me help ye git set up straight, like. Wonder ye ain't all twisted out er shape. Billy, run up an' tell ma ter come quick!"

## CHAPTER VIII

### WHEN SOPHOMORE YEAR DAWNED

"HERE we are again!" cried Grace Langford, as she tumbled her satchel, jacket, and umbrella upon a bare-looking couch, and surveyed the room with a quick, comprehensive glance. "Not quite so luxurious as Aphrodite's abode, but, oh, girls, we're right *in it* now!"

"And thank Heaven 'Darling' won't be! How did we *ever* endure that beast so long?" was Grace Houghton's feeling reply.

"Yes, we're sure to see all there's to be seen *this* year," commented Grace Percy, "and now let's investigate our new quarters. This room will, of course, be our study, and which of the others do you prefer, Grace? We can not have the luxury of separate rooms this year, I'm afraid, but we must not hope for everything in this world. To be sophomores and on the

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campus ought to satisfy the average mortal. This room is lovely. You take it, Grace, and Grace and I will share the other. I know she will be glad to have some one to make her bed for her every morning, and you like to be alone when a dramatic streak strikes you."

Just at that moment Mrs. Fox, the matron of the Evans House, tapped at the door, and asked:

"May I ask a favor of my new inmates? You have room here for one more, and there is not another corner in the house. Miss Esterbrook has wired at the very last moment for a room in this house. She did not expect to return this year, but her plans are changed. Are you willing to help me out of my dilemma?"

Mrs. Fox had always been a favorite with the students, and especially with the girls in her house, so it was not surprising that the Graces responded warmly when she appealed to them. It was then decided that Corrine Esterbrook should room with Grace Houghton, leaving the other Graces the larger room of the two.

Freshman year was a thing of the past, and



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the girls were now one step higher on the ladder of the college course. Their vacations had been passed in different parts of the world, Grace Langford wandering about Europe, Grace Percy in Canada, and Grace Houghton where she had least expected to be, for shortly after the summer vacation began Mr. Houghton returned from abroad, appearing among them as though he had dropped straight from the clouds. At first Mr. and Mrs. Percy hailed his advent with joy, feeling that now Grace would have her lawful guardian at hand to look after her. But, alas! their delight was doomed to receive a rather severe shock, for Mr. Houghton did not fulfil their ideals in even the smallest degree. A self-made man, who had risen from an office boy to considerable wealth, owing to his shrewdness and fortunate speculations, he had an eye ever open to the main chance, and managed to take all the good the gods chose to provide and never question their manner of coming by them. He was generous, in a way; that is, he spent money lavishly, but he hated personal discomfort, and took

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good care that he should escape it. When he married Bertha King he chose her for her beauty alone. Indeed, there would have been little else to choose had he been given to nice discriminations. For her part, she wanted wealth, and whatever luxuries wealth could give her. He liked to have some one to display it, and both were satisfied—for a time. She came of an old Philadelphia family, which, in earlier days, had boasted some very clever men and women as well as considerable wealth, but the riches had taken to themselves wings several generations earlier, leaving Bertha King in extremely straitened circumstances. It was at this period that Mr. Houghton had appeared upon the scene, and she made up her mind that riches were more valuable than anything else the world had to offer her.

Was it at all surprising that the issue of such a marriage should prove a problem to herself and many others?

Mrs. Percy was by no means reassured when she learned the plans for the summer. Mr. Houghton announced his intention of going to a

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fashionable watering-place, and to remonstrate with such a man was out of the question, nor did Mr. and Mrs. Percy feel in the least at liberty to do so. He was Grace's natural guardian, and at liberty to take her where he chose. When Mrs. Percy asked if he had decided upon a chaperon for Grace he burst into a loud laugh, and exclaimed:

"Chaperon be hanged! I guess her old daddy will be chaperon enough, and if he isn't able to keep the boys from looking at her, he isn't much account."

And forthwith Grace was launched into a whirl of excitement and gaiety more than calculated to undo all the good she had derived from two years under happier influences, for Mr. Houghton was proud in his vulgar way of this daughter, who had grown to be so attractive during the five years he had been separated from her. Once established at the United States Hotel Grace's inherited characteristics, which for so many months had been kept under wise restraint, found nothing to check them, and they went

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a-galloping. Her father delighted in the attention she attracted. He had purchased handsome clothes for her, far too handsome for a girl of her age, and when she was arrayed in these and promenading up and down the long piazza upon his arm he felt as though he had achieved a triumph.

But there were a good many hours when he did not care for his daughter's society, and she was left to look to her own amusement with some of the friends whom she had made at the hotel, while he followed the races, or some other games of chance, where more money slipped through his fingers than Grace or any one else guessed. But these matters did not affect Grace's pleasure, and she had no cause to complain of a want of generosity toward herself.

At length the holidays drew to an end, and Grace rejoined her friends at Ardwell when the college term began. To an outsider all seemed as before, but Grace Percy felt the change which had taken place. She realized that in some indefinable way Grace had grown away from her.

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There was greater independence of speech and action, albeit there had been no lack of both that first year at Laurel Hill. Then, however, it had been the capricious independence of a child; now it was the assurance of a woman who had taken her first taste of the great world, its fascinations, its shallows, its veneer, its small subterfuges. Grace had spent two months at an excellent school for this line of development. She still showed a strong friendship for Grace Percy, but the old frankness, the old confidence, seemed wanting. Grace did not realize that Grace Houghton had in a measure passed beyond the sweet, pure world in which her two friends dwelt, and that she now looked upon it as something all very well in its way, but rather tame.

In short, this human plant which had been propagated under hotbed influences, disastrously forced until little hope could be entertained of wholesome development, but which, nevertheless, *had* put forth some wonderfully sweet blossoms when permitted to bloom for a brief time in God's fresh air and sunshine, had been re-

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turned to the hothouse once more, and art was doing all it could to force a rapid development. Had this been put before Grace's father in just these words he would have laughed uproariously, and answered:

"Don't try to work off any such puritanical stuff on *me!* I guess I know the world well enough to pilot through it all right, and tow a handsome girl, too, if I want to!"

And now came Corrine Esterbrook, her bags and her belongings. Ah *me!* what a crisscross old creature Fate can be at times!

In a surprisingly short time she and Grace had struck a level, so to speak, for Grace was just primed and ready for the dashing junior's influence.

"Well, here I am," announced Corrine, "and if it were not for the fun I'm likely to get out of junior year, I'd be the most disgusted girl in Ardwell. I had fully made up my mind to spend this winter abroad with mamma and Maud, but that incorrigible father of mine wouldn't hear of it. Insisted upon my finishing the college course

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first. Such utter nonsense, too! What difference can it possibly make, I'd like to know? I shall never make the least use of all the stuff they're crowding into me here, for I mean to make a brilliant match when the right man applies, and of what use is a college diploma in securing *him*?"

"They want you to shine brilliantly in your social world, and do them credit," answered Grace from her perch on the step-ladder, for they were arranging their room. "But I fancy it's the girl, and not her brilliant attainments, the average man cares for. I used to have some maudlin ideas of that sort, but I got to know more about men last summer than I've had a chance to learn before, and, after all, they're not such overpowering creatures as the average schoolgirl is taught to believe. Here, give me a little boost, please, for this picture weighs half a ton."

Corrine laid down an armful of things which she had just lifted from her trunk and went to Grace's assistance. As she did so the pile which

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she had placed upon the couch toppled and fell to the floor. Among the things was a handsome silver cigarette case.

"Go it! Spill, every blessed one of you! Why *are* things so perverse?" cried their owner. When the picture was hung, Grace helped her gather up the scattered belongings, remarking, as she laid the case upon the couch:

"A pet indulgence, I suppose."

"Oh, I enjoy one occasionally. Sort of convivial, you know."

Grace made no further comment. The other Graces had gone over to see Gay Whiteley, and talk over the class meeting to take place the next day. Gay was now a junior, and as popular as ever.

But some others were popular, too, as Grace Percy learned before many days had passed, for an honor came to her which was all the more gratifying because unexpected.

"Girls, I can't believe it! It really can not be possible!" she cried, as she entered the study with half a dozen other girls following close



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upon her heels, and all talking as hard as they could talk. Each one sought to show her some little attention, and thus prove to her their delight at her election as their class president.

"But it *is*, honey! It surely *is* true!" exclaimed Grace Langford rapturously, as she removed Grace's hat and laid it carefully upon the table, as though it had suddenly become an object of reverence. "You're our grand, high mogul and potentate, and we're *so* proud of you!"

"So proud that we will be model subjects," added Grace Houghton, "and here's an earnest of my loyalty." She placed a big dish of fudge in Grace's lap.

"And I slipped into the office to send a telegram to your mother," was Gay Whiteley's announcement, "for I know what it means to be elected soph president myself." Gay had been a very popular president of her class during sophomore year.

"What can I ever do to prove to you all how much I appreciate this honor?" cried Grace, with

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a little catch in her voice, for she felt it deeply. "The only shadow in my sunlight is caused by the thought that neither Grace Langford nor Grace Houghton can share this honor with me. Hitherto we have 'hunted in couples,'" she cried with a laugh, even though her eyes were suspiciously bright as she looked at those two friends.

"Don't be too sure of that," answered Grace Houghton. "Do you for one moment imagine that we mean to be left out of the glory. Just you wait and see."

Grace Langford pushed a hassock to Grace's feet, and then dropped down upon it to clasp her hands upon Grace's knees and look solemnly into her face, as she asked:

"Do I look like a girl who would crawl into a little hole and hide away from the sunshine? Just *watch* me blaze in the glory which envelopes you, honey. I'll fairly dazzle my friends."

And before she closed her eyes that night Grace Percy realized that her friends certainly could hark in some of her light for just as the

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clock struck nine there arose beneath their windows:

“Three cheers for the President of Naughty-three, Grace Islington Percy, Rah-rah-rah!!!” in a chorus of voices which left no doubt as to their enthusiasm if sound could express it.

## CHAPTER IX

### WHEN SOPHOMORE YEAR ENDED

“It is no use for me to spik some more! I hev plead wis you and say, oh, many, *many* times, how *leetle* you gain. Yet, wherefore, ze use?” cried Madam DelaVergesne, spreading her hands deprecatingly in a truly French gesture, and shaking her head in despair.

“Why, madam, I am sure I did wonders last semester, and only the remainder of this one to render an account for. You don’t want me to overtax my poor brain, do you?”

“Ovairtax! Pouf! There is leetle danger that you will ovairtax. Last year—yes. *Zen* there might be, for zen you do ze haard work like ze othaire young ladies of your name. You work wis them, and when ze yeer end, you boath all have raison to feel proud. But zees year!—non. non. And whv?”

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Madam cast a quick glance from her keen black eyes toward a figure leaning carelessly against a statue of Molière, which stood at the entrance of the recitation hall, from which she and Grace Houghton had just come. Corrine was waiting for Grace, but this did not deter madam from freeing her mind.

“ I tell you I know not why I take zees trouble to make you zees warning, and I weel not again to take it, for you aire not a leetle child anny moaire; you aire old enough to see what is on front of you. If you hand me anny moaire of zees papaires—well. You weesh to be like zees friend you have choose, a girl who is all aboaive board, a girl who gives it right up, who will throw everything away? Yes, who will throw up everything, who will not work. You weesh to be such a girl as theese? Tut, tut! Why do I talk? Why? ”

Poor Madam DelaVergesne! words in a foreign tongue failed her, and the amusement in her listener's eyes caused her to suspect that in her endeavors to make use of some of the strange

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American expressions, which were at once her aim and her despair, she had made an amusing error; yet just wherein it lay was a mystery to her. Had she not heard repeatedly that trifling, frivolous characters were all on the surface, and did not this obviously mean visible? "Above board?" And, surely, if a person lacked concentration, was easily diverted, ready to give up, it *must* mean the same as throwing it up. Then why these twinkling eyes and quivering lips?

Well, madam would wash her hands of it all, and yet—and yet—Grace Houghton was very, very like "la petite sœur" far away in France.

Nevertheless, that smile had a sequel, as was proved by the note which Grace Houghton found upon the bulletin board not many days later.

"Miss Houghton will please review her French with a competent tutor, and take another examination."

"Will she, indeed!" was Miss Houghton's vehement comment when she had read the note to the end. Then she fled to the Evans House.

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"Does she take me for an infant! Review! I guess so! I will *not*! My paper was *fully* as good as any other, only she had run off with a bee in her bonnet over last year's work. It isn't because she does not find my *work* to her liking, but because my *friends* are not, and that is just *none* of her business!" she stormed, as she cast her note-book and Racine upon the table where Grace Percy sat busily writing, thereby overturning the ink-stand and deluging everything.

"Oh, Grace!" cried Grace Percy, springing to her feet and striving to save the result of weeks of careful labor. Grace Houghton caught up a towel and endeavored to stem the black flood which was rushing from table to rug, but the ink-well was what Grace Langford termed "a family affair," and its contents generous.

"I'm awfully sorry, Grace, awfully!" cried Grace Houghton, sopping wildly. "I wouldn't have done it for the world. You know that, don't you? I don't believe it has done much harm though, do you? And I'll help you copy the spoiled sheets. Odious woman to anger me like

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this, and all for nothing at all. There, I think there are only these to be rewritten, and I'll get them done in no time. Do speak! Say something, and don't look so ghastly white. It isn't a matter of life and death, is it? What difference can it make whether this is completed at one o'clock or five?"

"Miss Webster asked me to have it ready this morning. I do not know her reason, but she was most explicit about it. I am afraid it is impossible now, Grace. I was finishing the last sheet."

She spoke quietly, but her hands trembled as she laid aside the ruined papers, and her voice sounded unnatural. She avoided Grace's eyes, as she had fallen into a habit of doing recently, and seemed to shrink from close contact with her.

"Here, make a place for me, and I'll copy as fast as I can. Was there *ever* such a beastly shame? I dare say an editorial appointment, or some such hollow honor rests upon the punctuality with which these sheets are handed in. *That* would be just *my* luck. I don't care a straw for such nonsense myself. for what does it all



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amount to when all is said and done? Four years of living by 'bell, book, and candle' in my opinion can't govern one's life. But you think differently, so it is no use to come to an issue about it. For my part, I'm *deadly* sick of it all, and if it were not for you I'd ask papa to open our house and let me have a little fun. He doesn't need much urging. But you're a sort of 'sheet-anchor,' you see, and liable to hold when everything else goes by the board."

As Grace talked she removed her hat and coat and cast them savagely upon a chair, ran her fingers through her hair, as though striving to unsnarl more than its kinks, and settled herself at the table. Grace Percy had said very little during this tirade, but now coming close to Grace's side, she laid her hands upon her shoulders, and said very gently:

"I wish I *could* be a sheet-anchor, Grace, I *truly* do, but somehow the cable seems to slip nowadays. What is the reason, I wonder? I love you as dearly as ever, I'm sure, but I *don't* seem to be much use. Perhaps I'm too selfish,

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and wrapped up in my own ambitions. Never mind those papers; they can wait a while. Tell me what has happened."

"Happened! That idiotic woman says I'm to be *tutored* in French! The idea! Why, I can speak it *ten times better* than she can speak *English* this minute. Such nonsense as she can reel off is enough to convulse a saint. I wish you could have heard the absurd things she talked at Corrine the other day. It was no wonder we both smiled, and *that* is the reason I am pounced upon now. Does she suppose that I am so dense after living in Paris nearly three years? But I will *not* review, and that settles it!"

Grace did not attempt to argue or remonstrate. She knew it would be worse than useless. There had been too many such scenes during this sophomore year, now drawing to its close. She understood that words would be powerless to check this friend whom she still loved, and in whom, notwithstanding her many shortcomings, she still had faith. It had been a trying year for all three. Grace Houghton's intimacy with Cor-

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rine had increased steadily, and only served to strengthen the evil influence which Mr. Houghton's unfortunate arrival had established, and which he seemed determined to bring to some startling climax if he continued in his present course. When the Christmas holiday came he took Grace to Bermuda, starting two days before the vacation began, and detaining her a week after the winter recess ended. This did not improve matters any, although some were much in need of adjusting.

Several escapades, under Corrine's superior generalship that year, had come very near bringing disaster hot-foot upon Grace. One was a grand "Smoke," which took place upon the roof of the extension of the Evans House late in October, where several convivial spirits met one night somewhat after the ten o'clock bell had rung, and enjoyed their cigarettes with a bottle of green Chartreuse which Corrine produced. Their trampling over the tins resulted in so cracking the solder which held the sheets together that the next rain-storm deluged the dining-room be-

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neath. This mirthful departure was followed by another a trifle more hilarious. When, however, the *third* of the series took place the smokers were caught red-handed, or rather, red-cigar-retted, by Mrs. Fox, and the cause of the leaky roof was discovered. Then the plumbers, who had already been twice berated for inefficiency, and had retaliated by sending in a truly amazing bill for their services, were exonerated. Not so the smokers.

Yet this was only one of many departures which threatened to end a college career for some of the girls. As president of her class, this was all peculiarly trying for Grace Percy, and she began to regard herself as a parody upon the old adage that virtue is its own reward. So far as she herself was concerned, she could do her best, and did do it, but it was impossible for her to keep Grace Houghton within bounds, and she could not understand why.

She was hardly old enough to realize that it would take more than one girl's influence to overcome the result of years of misrule heredity and

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a father whose moral standard was hopelessly out of balance. So she worried over it until she was in a fair way to undermine her health and ruin her own prospects.

Grace Langford took an entirely different stand. Even though she had been very fond of Grace Houghton, it was Grace *Percy* whom she loved with all the warmth of her Southern heart, and it aroused her indignation to see this dear friend so troubled by a girl whom she declared:

“Isn’t fit to hold your *shoes* for you, honey, if she can let you drop for a girl like Corrine and those in her set. I surely *am* out of patience with her and them, too, and I can’t see what she finds so attractive in them. You shall *not* fret so, for you can’t help it, and you can’t stop her to save your life, so you know you ought not worry about it.”

“I can’t help it, Grace. I grew so fond of her at Laurel Hill, and—well, *mamma* grew fond of her, too. We had such a happy summer at Toronto. I don’t believe that it can *all* be undone in just this little time. It isn’t reasonable!”

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"Maybe it's more reasonable to believe that the other side of it could not all have been undone in two years, after seventeen had been given to doing her up in such pretty shape," was Grace's grim retort, for the last scene between herself and G. H. had been a rather electrical one, and Grace had said a few things, and had a few things said to her in return. Hence the chill in the air.

"I don't believe it! I just *won't*," persisted Grace, a look stealing over her face and a curve coming upon her lips which Grace Langford knew meant: "Do or die!"

"I'll believe almost anything since you lost your chance for Sigma Phi. I know perfectly well that your Wordsworth paper had *some* bearing upon that," and Grace nodded her head ominously.

"How could it, Grace? Miss Webster had nothing to do with those elections."

"I don't care. I *know* it had some influence. You know as well as I do that it is only the really clever girls who do get in, and who is better pre-

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pared to say who are clever, or with whom do the editorial appointments rest if not with Miss Webster? And you could have had another day if you had only asked for it. I don't believe I'll *ever* forgive you for that."

"It wouldn't have been fair to the others, Grace," was all Grace Percy said, but a quiver passed over her face, for that had been one of her hardest trials junior year. She had worked hard and faithfully and—failed. Miss Webster learned the facts later.

And now examinations were over. Baccalaureate sermon had been heard, Commencement exercises were ended, and farewells about to be said.

## CHAPTER X

### JUNIOR HONORS

GRACE PERCY sat in her room at the Evans House sorting over old themes and various papers, the result of two years' work. Grace Langford had gone down-town to "forage for the firm," as she expressed it. Sunshine filled the room and the study which adjoined it. Birds called from the trees just beyond the open windows, and October's glorious air flooded all the world. Now and again the sound of a merry laugh or gay voices came across the campus, as groups of girls passed by, but within the house all was silent, for the day was too beautiful for the students to remain housed.

Grace was house-cleaning, and had emptied cupboards, bureau-drawers, and trunk. All about her lay old note-books, papers, and text-books which had done service during freshman



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year and sophomore year, and as she looked at them her face wore the expression one often sees upon the face of an older person when looking at a child who has done something clever in its own sight, but really not so remarkable from a maturer point of view.

Paper after paper was taken up, glanced through, and laid aside, until she came to one bearing the word "Excellent" in Miss Webster's characteristic hand. She read it through slowly, and when she reached the end sat perfectly still with it held tightly in her hand, and looked absently out into the golden world beyond the windows. She was picturing a very different scene upon that glowing background. Months had slipped by since that scene was enacted, and Grace found it hard to reconcile herself to some of the happenings of those months.

At the close of the sophomore year she had invited Grace Houghton to return to New York with her, and later accompany the family to Canada. Grace had accepted the invitation to go to New York, but declined the invitation for

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Canada, saying that she expected to go with her father to Long Branch. She remained with the Percys ten days, and during that period seemed more like the old Grace than she had seemed for months, particularly with Mrs. Percy. But they all felt that the cable was seriously strained, and dreaded the flaw that would prove it no stronger than its weakest point. Her father came from Washington to claim her and carry her off to another round of gaiety and excitement, and Grace did not see her until they all met again at Ardwell in September.

Grace Percy and Grace Langford at once took up their old quarters in the Evans House, but Grace Houghton went into the Allyn with Corrine, who declared that nothing would induce her to spend another year in the Evans. Grace's only excuse for her defection was that the Allyn was nearer the recitation halls, and that it was useless to argue with Corrine when she had made up her mind to do anything. Grace Percy did not ask whether Corrine came first in everything nowadays, but she realized only too fully

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that the two old friends were being pushed aside by that dashing young lady. So she and Grace Langford established themselves without a word of reproach to Grace Houghton, although Grace Percy was keenly alive to the fact that beneath one apparently calm and unruffled exterior there slumbered a mine which it would take very little to fire. Grace Langford was the same merry, happy-go-lucky, warm-hearted, quick-witted Grace while with Grace or her chosen Ardwell friends, but there had crept into her attitude toward Grace Houghton a certain well-bred reserve. She was quite as agreeable as ever, and laughed and talked pleasantly, but Grace Houghton resented this reserve more keenly than she would have resented open censure. Indeed, there had arisen more than one situation during the past year when she seemed to almost court it. Was it because conscience hinted that she deserved it, and to such a nature as hers action was a necessity? Her manner seemed to say:

“If you do not approve of my conduct why

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don't you say so, and give me an opportunity to tell you that it is none of your business?"

But Grace Langford did not accept the challenge.

Curiously enough, in spite of many mad frolics, and the tremendous tension put upon the unwritten laws of the college world, Grace managed somehow to do pretty good work, and stand fairly well with her class. Naturally keen-witted, it was not difficult for her to digest enough to carry her through, and it was no doubt this which proved her life-preserver with the faculty, for in this direction there was little room for criticism. The French episode had taught Grace a lesson which she long remembered, for take a second examination she had to and did, and with anything but a good grace. However, she learned then the necessity of keeping up to a certain standard or accepting the alternative of dropping out of the college world, and this she had too much pride to do while the other Graces remained in it. Grace Percy never made any comment upon this peculiar phase of Grace's

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character, yet nothing could persuade her that it was not a real love for the work which prompted the girl to do it as she did.

During her sophomore year Grace Houghton had made great strides in her dramatic work. She was now on the committee, and taking an active part in all the college plays. Several times D'Argent had been up to train the girls, and each time had said to Grace:

"If you ever decide to go upon the professional stage come straight to me, and I'll place you without the least trouble. You are already better fitted for it than half the women who apply to me."

As Grace Percy sat thinking over all these happenings on that beautiful October afternoon, and rejoicing in the good fortune and fun which had come to her friends, for Grace Langford was now the leader of the Banjo Club, a tap came upon the door, and in response to Grace's "Come in," a little freshman opened it to say:

"I found this on the bulletin board, Miss Percy, and thought you might like to have it."

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"Oh, thank you so much, but you shouldn't have taken the trouble to come across the campus," said Grace, as she rose from her chair and took the note extended to her. "Won't you sit down, Miss Prescott? I'm afraid I'm rather unpretty to look at, for I'm housecleaning and things are in an awful mess, but I *can* talk."

"Thank you, but I must not stop just now. I'm on my way to the library. It was no trouble at all to bring the note. Good-by," and away hurried the little girl, who had evidently taken Grace Percy as her ideal junior, and made up her mind that she would choose her for "guide, philosopher, and friend," if Grace would let her. When she had gone Grace opened her note and read:

"The Sigma Phi Society of Ardwell College extends a cordial invitation to Miss Percy to become one of its members. An answer is desired.

"ELIZABETH WETMORE, Sect."

Grace's color came and went rapidly. She dropped back into the chair from which she had

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risen upon Miss Prescott's entrance, and as she did so her eyes fell upon the paper she had laid upon the table. The word "Excellent" was plainly to be seen. Catching it up in her hands she pressed it to her lips, and with an unsteady little laugh cried softly, as though reassuring some one who had doubted: "It didn't matter so much after all, did it? It only meant to wait a little while longer, and she never guessed how it hurt to do it. But it's all right now, you know, and I'll tell you all about it, although I wouldn't last spring."

When Grace Langford entered the room ten minutes later Grace was writing away for dear life.

"Why, honey-bun, I thought you were going for a pull as soon as you finished house-cleaning, and here you are quill-driving like mad. Quit! and put on your sun-bonnet this minute," she cried, endeavoring to pull Grace from the desk.

Grace made no reply, but lifting the portentous little note, held it toward Grace, who opened it, read it in a flash, tossed it back upon the desk,

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flung from her the parcels she carried, gathered up her walking skirt in both hands and dashed into a regular darky double shuffle, singing at the top of her voice:

“ If you git dar befo’ I do,  
Jist tell ‘em I’s a-comin’ too!  
Hoop-la!”

In the midst of her hilarity there came a trampling of many feet through the corridor, their door was flung open, and several girls rushed in, all crying out:

“ We heard it from Gay! No, she didn’t tell it in *words*, but she laughed, and looked so delightedly self-conscious when we vowed we’d find out that we couldn’t *help* knowing it was true, and, oh, Gracie P., we’re all so delighted! Go on, Grace, that’s too good to end so suddenly, but let me have a hand in it, too,” cried Madge Harding, catching up Grace’s banjo and strumming away like mad.

“ And *we* dignified juniors,” laughed Grace Percv. when Grace’s mad frolic came to an end



### THREE GRACES AT COLLEGE

simply because she had no breath left for either singing or dancing.

"Shall I take the letter to the box for you? I'm dying to be of service to the new member of Sigma Phi," said Bess Clifton, taking up the stamped and addressed envelope which lay on Grace's desk.

"Thanks, if you will, Bess, I *had* to write it," she whispered as the other girls were laughing over Grace Langford's nonsense.

"Of course, I know," answered Bess, with a confident little nod. "I didn't wait a minute when my honors came. And now let me be the one to send this message to your mother, and—hold still half a minute—there, girls, doesn't she become it well?" Bess fastened her pretty gold pin with its white enameled letters upon a green background on Grace's shirt-waist, and stood back to admire the effect.

"Sing to her, girls! Sing!" cried Madge.

When did a group of college girls need urging to sing? Out from the open windows and across the campus floated:

## JUNIOR HONORS

"Here's to Gracie P.,  
She's the greatest of the three;  
Drink her down, drink her down, drink her  
Down, down, down!"

On the night of Grace's first society meeting Bess called for her, for Bess had been the one to propose her for membership. As they went down-stairs together Grace Langford stood at the top, her arms filled with all the shoes and slippers she could beg, borrow, or steal.

"One to make ready!" she cried, hurling an old slipper with more energy than aim, for it grazed Grace's head and landed in the umbrella-stand.

"Two to go!" and down came an old bedroom shoe.

"*Three for good measure!*" and sounce into a bowl of gold-fish which stood upon the hall table landed Grace's white satin slipper.

"A dozen for luck! *luck!* LUCK—!" she shrieked, and down rattled an armful as Grace and Bess fled for their lives.

In the midst of the leathery shower Mrs. Fox

### THREE GRACES AT COLLEGE

appeared, glanced upward, and beheld Grace in the act of firing her last bit of ammunition.

"Save the pieces!" she cried, and dodged as a bit of Grace's own dainty foot-gear came hurtling past her, to be followed by Grace, who flung herself into Mrs. Fox's arms, crying:

"Oh, Mrs. Fox, *don't* you care! It's all for Grace and good luck, and only *once* in a lifetime, and I know you want Grace to shine like a great big arc light, don't you?"

"Madcap!" was Mrs. Fox's answer, as she pulled Grace's ear with one hand and fished the slipper out of the bowl with the other. "Better get this into shape for your next dance, for it's rapidly having all the dancing quality soaked out of it."

During the days which followed No. 7 Evans House bloomed as a posy bed, for every available vase, pitcher, bowl, and tub was pressed into service to hold the flowers which were showered upon the new member of Sigma Phi, for Grace had received more votes than any girl among the honored "first five."

## CHAPTER XI

### STORMY WATERS

THE year crept along, and February with its blustering winds, driving storms, and everything which goes to make it the most doleful month of the year, dragged by, for, even though the shortest of all the months, February manages to make itself disagreeably prominent. The girls decided that something must be done to break the monotony of this junior year February, and many plans were discussed. At length one was decided upon. There should be a grand patriotic demonstration on Washington's birthday with speeches, a debate, toasts in mild beverages to the hero of the day, and a lively dance to conclude the celebration. Grace Percy wrote at once to her mother and Adalaide, who replied that they would embrace this holiday season for their long promised visit to Ardwell. for Adalaide was

### THREE GRACES AT COLLEGE

rarely free to wander far from Laurel Hill. When the letter of acceptance reached Ardwell there was wild rejoicing at No. 7 Evans House.

"We'll paint the Evans House a lurid vermilion!" cried Grace Langford. "We'll get a corner on all the good things in the town. We'll trot out all the clever girls and make them do every stunt they know. Oh, Grace, it must be the very time of our lives. And we'll take them to the Gym afterward and show them off to the whole college."

"What do you think my mother will say to being toasted on Washington's birthday?" demanded Grace.

"Say!" cried Grace, nothing daunted, "she'll act nobly, and tell us all how glad she is to represent the British flag which got tangled up in the Yankee one, yet hadn't the heart to absorb within its folds a country destined to produce such college girls as we are. You see if she doesn't."

"I'm going to run over to the Allyn and tell Grace the news, and ask her to hold herself free

## STORMY WATERS

for our spread and fun," cried Grace, as she caught up her golf cape, flung it about her shoulders, and dragged the hood over her head. "I know she will want to see mamma and Adalaide, and be with us as much as possible."

She did not look at Grace as she spoke, but hurried from the room. A strange expression stole over Grace Langford's face as Grace passed through the door, and she pressed her lips tightly together as though striving to keep some words shut in.

Grace Percy sped across the campus, and presently arrived at No. 7 Allyn. As she raised her hand to knock upon the door she overheard through the open transom above it some words which caused a brighter color to rush to her cheeks than her run across the campus had put there.

"That's all confounded nonsense! But I dare say it's a remnant of your goody-goodism from your two years' association with Miss Propriety in No. 7 Evans. When *will* you succeed in throwing off that fool yoke?"

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"I often wish I'd never succeeded as well as I have. It was pretty hard to pull even, but left a wonderfully self-satisfied feeling while I did. Bah! What a beastly world it is anyway! Turn in what direction you will, sawdust dolls shake their wooden vitals over you!"

At this point Grace rapped smartly upon the door, for she had been powerless to do so before, and opened it quickly at the "Enter" called from within.

Grace Houghton sat at her desk with several open letters before her, a five-pound box of Huyler's stood near her, with a dish of salted almonds beside it. Corrine, in an elaborate kimona, and slippers with exaggerated French heels, was stretched upon the divan with handsome pillows piled high about her, and one of De Kock's novels in her hand. The other hand held an unlighted cigarette. As Grace entered she partly rose from the couch and laid the cigarette upon a beautiful little taborette standing near by, saying in a tone which Grace found it difficult not to resent:

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"Ah, here cometh the fair Agalia, emissary of Peace, to rebuke the votaries of Pleasure. Sit down, Miss Percy, and let us imbibe virtue from your very presence."

If Grace Houghton's eyes could have withered her, certainly Corrine would have shriveled up by inches, for Grace had not yet arrived at that stage of the game which Corrine was endeavoring to teach her, when she could see Grace Percy treated with discourtesy. She had sprung to her feet as Grace entered and hastened toward her with both hands extended, saying:

"Why, Gracie, this is good of you! I'm no end glad to see you. Sit here in front of the open fire; it's such a beastly day."

"Is it?" asked Grace, laughing, for after a brief greeting to Corrine she let her drop completely and accepted the chair which Grace drew up to the fire, little realizing that she had administered to the self-satisfied Corrine as cutting a slight as it was possible for her to receive, for that young lady liked to feel that her tongue held barbed darts for those she chose to pierce.



### THREE GRACES AT COLLEGE

beyond the pale of her favor, and Grace's serene ignoring of her venom nettled her not a little. She would have preferred a sharp retort, for this would have acknowledged her power. She did not understand the metal of which Grace was made.

Grace's errand was soon told, and Grace Houghton was unfeignedly pleased.

"Of *course*, I'll come! What time will they arrive?"

"By the three-forty train. I'm sorry I can't go down to meet them, but I have Lab work with Professor Wycoff. Grace is going, though, and she'll do the honors like a dear."

"I'll go, too!" burst out Grace. "I'd love to and I can just as well as not."

"Not quite," drawled Corrine, "when you pause to consider that you've promised the girls and me to play bridge."

"Hang bridge! Get some one else to take my place. I've been bridged to death, and am worse than broke now." The words had evidently leaped out before Grace realized their import,

## STORMY WATERS

for she glanced quickly at Grace Percy and flushed slightly. But Grace gave no sign, and Corrine decided that "the poor innocent hadn't caught on." Grace Houghton did not feel so confident, and could have strangled Corrine for her next words.

"Shall I tell the girls you've shown the white feather, or that you are still waiting for your next check?"

"Tell them anything you choose. I don't think telling can slay me. I'll be on hand, Grace, and I'll send my posy for the little Mater, too. Must you go? I was on the point of running over to see you, for I wanted to show you this letter from Florence Colt. She's to be married in June, and wants me to be one of her bridesmaids. She has written reams about her clothes and things. Here, take the letter with you and read it when you have a chance." Grace caught up a letter from the pile upon her desk and thrust it into Grace's hand. Grace slipped it into the little bag at her side, saying:

"Dear old Florence. how I'd love to see her.

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It doesn't seem possible that she's really going to be married, does it? Why, Grace, it was only yesterday that we were all up in the Laurel Hill attic wondering where you and Grace had got to that Hallowe'en night when we were testing our fortunes. And here we are juniors! I'll enjoy reading her letter. Good-by. So glad you are coming. Mamma and Adalaide will be delighted. Three-forty, remember. Good afternoon, Corrine."

As Grace's steps receded, Grace Houghton turned toward Corrine, gave her one prolonged, withering look, the corners of her eyes contracting ominously, and her mouth firmly set. Then turning to her desk she swooped up the litter upon it, bundled everything pell-mell into one of the compartments, and slammed the lid shut. Turning to her closet she jerked from it her heavy golf cape, threw it tempestuously about her shoulders, and stalked from the room. As the door went crashing together behind her Corrine called tauntingly through the transom:

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"Where are you going, dearest? Need a constitutional?"

"To perdition, with you for a pilot," was the reply hurled back.

A derisive laugh proved that the retort had been heard.

Mrs. Percy and Adalaide arrived punctually, and were welcomed by the two Graces, Grace Houghton seeming more like the old Grace, who had been so much a part of Mrs. Percy's family for a time, that Grace Langford marveled at the change, but wisely refrained from manifesting any surprise.

"Wait a minute, girls," cried Adalaide, when the greetings at the station were over; "there is something I must look after before we go up to the Evans or Daddykins will never forgive me. I promised him faithfully that this blessed box should go up to college in our own carriage, and I'd not lose sight of it a second." She hurried back to the baggage-room to reappear a moment later followed by a hawkey porter bearing a big

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box which he deposited carefully at the feet of the driver of the hack awaiting them.

"He said since he could not come with us he *must* be represented, and I only hope his representation won't prove fatal, for he went to Mazzetti's himself to have this box prepared, and took it in his cab to the Grand Central lest we come away without it."

"And he bade us tell you that all the little chinks were filled in with his love for his three dear girls," added Mrs. Percy.

Shortly after they reached the Evans House Grace Percy came flying in and another flurry took place.

"My precious little mother, let me look at you and rumple you up, and hold you on my lap, and torment you, just to make sure that you are really truly at Ardwell," she cried, dropping into her Morris chair and drawing her mother upon her lap despite her struggles and protests. "It's no use to do battle. I'm heaps bigger than you are, and strong as Goliath of Gath. So submit as gracefully as you can. What do you think

## STORMY WATERS

my five feet eight inches count for if I can't do a scrap of a woman who never grew above five feet *three ?* ”

“Take this, Grace!” called Mrs. Percy in desperation, handing to Grace Langford a parcel which she held. “Flee to a place of safety with it, for I'm set upon by Philistines and can no longer guard it, yet upon my head will descend calamity if misfortune befall the contents of that paper. Papa sent it with his love for his girls. Bear witness to my last words,” and she resigned herself to annihilation at her daughter's hands, while Grace Langford and Grace Houghton fled to the other end of the room to open the parcel.

“Oh, how perfectly sweet!” cried Grace Langford, as three beautiful little water-colors came to view, each an exquisite landscape. Upon the back of the first was written:

“For my Grace: ‘A Quiet Evening in Spring.’” Upon the second: “For my Comrade: ‘A Winter Sunset.’” Upon the third: “For my little Southerner: ‘I chatter. chatter

### THREE GRACES AT COLLEGE

as I flow.' ” Mr. Percy's delicate skill was evident in each. The first picture showed a narrow stream flowing beneath a little grove of white birches, whose trunks cast long shadows across the country road which followed the course of the stream and vanished behind the clump of cedars which formed the background of the water-color. Over all rested the glow of the setting sun. The second picture represented the same scene in winter, with snow lying upon the cedars, the bare branches of the birches, and covering the ground. The third picture told of mid-summer, with a little laughing brook flowing through the silent, cool, dreamy woodland.

Grace Langford went into ecstasies of delight, but Grace Houghton said very little as she walked over to the window with her sketch and turned her back to the others. She had seen the original of that little water-color drawing many times, for Mr. Percy had made these sketches while in Canada. But she had seen it as it appeared in Grace Percy's sketch; glowing in the sunshine which flooded all the world with prom-

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ise. She had never looked upon it in its winter dress, and Mr. Percy little guessed how its chill struck to the girl's heart, or how it seemed to typify to her impressionable nature her altered life. She looked at it long and steadily, unnoticed by the other Graces, who were in raptures over their own treasures, but Mrs. Percy and Adalaide noted the quick sigh, and the strained look upon the girl's lips as she turned and placed her picture where the light fell full upon it and it could be admired by all.



## CHAPTER XII

### THE TWO DROMIOS

AT five o'clock the following afternoon the Graces' study and the bedrooms which adjoined it presented a truly festive appearance. Mrs. Fox had been interviewed, and had laughingly agreed to stuff her ears with cotton, keep her nose buried in the big bunch of violets which Adalaide had sent her, and her eyes occupied with the volume of Mrs. Deland's stories which Mrs. Percy had brought to her from New York. She also hinted that No. 5 would be unoccupied, and that it might serve well as a base of supplies if they wished. So all three rooms were given over to the reception committee. The green window shades had been drawn down, and the lamps and candelabra, borrowed from all quarters for the occasion, cast a soft rosy glow over

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the prettily spread table in the study. Truly, there was spread a feast for the gods! Cold chicken, lobster salad, dainty lettuce sandwiches, flaky rolls, just ready to melt in one's mouth, stuffed eggs, olives, salted pecans, a monstrous iced chocolate cake of untold layers, and bonbons which cried aloud, "I'm a Frenchman!" Fascinating cups filled with chocolate, upon which stiffly whipped cream did the grand balancing act, and a dozen other dainties invited speedy annihilation. The Graces received their friends and presented them to Mrs. Percy and Adalaide, and "Graces" they truly were; Grace Percy, tall and stately in a white organdy, her beautiful neck and arms gleaming soft and white, her hair piled high upon her stately head. Grace Langford in a maize yellow crêpe de chène, a tiny golden chain with topaz pendant about her neck. Grace Houghton was handsomer than ever in a deep crimson liberty satin, a survival of the summer's Long Branch wardrobe.

Madge Harding was there, Gay Whiteley, and six other girls. Four pretty freshmen passed

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the good things, and were petted and fed by those they served. Mrs. Percy and Adalaide were at once made part and parcel of the whole, and enjoyed themselves hugely. Mrs. Percy had a hundred and one things to tell, and seemed to possess an intimate knowledge of each girl's affairs. How Gay had scored a hit in the last college play, and Madge been appointed assistant leader of the Glee Club. How little Miss Prescott had played on the Basket-ball Team, and won for the freshmen, etc., etc.

Then Adalaide won their hearts by promising to play for them the following morning, and what with all sorts of funny stunts, laughter, and general merry-making, the time slipped away and eight o'clock stole upon the revelers before they realized where the time had gone. Then all scrambled into wraps and hurried away to the Gym.

Mrs. Percy and Adalaide were by no means the only guests at Ardwell for this festive occasion, for many of the girls had invited relatives to be present at the debate which was to decide

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*whether* George Washington would not have been a greater credit to his native land had he been born *Georgianna*.

Excellent seats had been reserved for Mrs. Percy and Adalaide, and the Graces managed to keep close at hand. The substance of the debate has no part in this story, but it was ultimately proven that *Georgianna* could have given Georgie "trumps," and then have "walked all over him." When the debate was ended an impromptu dance turned the erstwhile solemn occasion into a frolic, and the brothers and cousins, who had sat listening with serious faces while their sex was being "knocked all over the place," as one six-foot youth expressed it, became gay and gallant cavaliers.

Mrs. Percy and the Graces stood near the platform while the pretty ushers directed their willing slaves as to the bestowal of chairs, and the floor was speedily cleared. Mrs. Percy was talking with a member of the faculty, and the Graces were laughing over the outcome of the debate, when suddenly Grace Langford caught hold of

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Grace Percy's arm and gave a funny little gasping exclamation.

Grace looked at her in amazement, for her face was certainly a study; it expressed blank incredulity.

"What on earth is the matter?" asked Grace Percy under her breath.

"That *man*! He must be a spook, for I saw him go across this very platform with an armful of chairs not two seconds ago, and here he comes with Mabel Prescott. Grace, it's positively uncanny."

"Hush!" whispered Grace, swallowing a laugh in order to respond to little Miss Prescott's—

"Miss Percy, may I present my brother to you? He tells me he knew Mr. Morford at the Columbia Law when Mr. Morford took his special there last winter. Harold took his degree at that time also. Miss Langford, I want you to know my brother, too."

Miss Prescott beamed upon the tall young man beside her, and it did not require the medium of

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words to explain that she was very proud of the young LL.B. she was presenting to her friends. Grace Percy welcomed him in her gracious, cordial manner, but for the first time on record Grace Langford seemed to lack self-possession and her greeting was somewhat incoherent.

“Am I to have a dance, Miss Percy? Mab tells me we are to foot it lightly for an hour or so, and that I may be trusted at large if I promise not to claim too many honors at the hands of the fair Ardwellites. Great joke, this debate. Poor old Geordie; I wonder how he feels at the outcome? Let me take his little hatchet a moment.”

He took from Grace's hand the tiny green cardboard hatchet she held, and wrote his initials opposite a waltz. Meanwhile Grace Langford and Mabel Prescott were chatting away right merrily when—

“Oh, Mab, come here this minute! We need you in the commissary department,” cried one of the refreshment committee. and saving to her

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"Excuse me a moment, Harold," which, by the way, fell upon unheeding ears, off she hurried.

"Grace! Grace Langford, where are you? Come and help me read the riot act to Katharine Fair," cried a tall senior, swooping down upon Grace and bearing her away. As they crossed the platform and passed through the door at the farther end of it they were brought to a stand-still by a crowd of men and girls, the former piling folding-chairs in a corner, and the girls all talking and directing at once. There was not much space left for the newcomers, and the next thing Grace knew her skirts were hopelessly tangled up in three or four chairs which had ignominiously collapsed in the very middle of the floor. In her efforts to free herself she lost her balance, and would have plunged headlong had not a stout pair of arms instantly dropped half a dozen camp-chairs and received the dainty Grace in their place, as the owner of the arms exclaimed:

"Hold hard! Breakers ahead! Are you

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hurt?" and Grace was lifted lightly as a child to a place of safety.

"Oh, no! Not in the least, thank you. So stupid of me anyway. I'm——" and then she glanced into her rescuer's face.

"Oh, Mr. Prescott, I did not know it was you! Such a mess as we are in here with all these chairs. Do let us get out of it," for Grace's senior had vanished in the crowd and she did not feel called upon to risk her neck in search of her.

"With joyful anticipations," was the prompt reply, although a merry twinkle had sprung into the man's eyes as he followed his dainty guide. "In for it again, Wallace, my boy," he muttered under his breath. "Well, *IT* is all right this time, my son, and don't you lose sight of it a second if you can help it."

As they stepped through the door leading back to the main floor of the Gym, where dancing was now in full swing, Corrine Esterbrook glanced up and exclaimed:

"Well. I declare! If that isn't about the cool-



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est thing I've ever seen done! I owe you one, my lady."

"Pay it on demand," cried a voice at her elbow.

"You may count on me!" was Corrine's reply to the girl who spoke.

"What's up, Rene?"

"That little dinkey chit!" cried the enraged Corrine, pointing at the unsuspecting Grace and her big companion.

"Did she steal your man, girlie? Don't you care. Don't let it rattle you in the least. There are plenty more on hand and one's as good as another."

"Oh, go away!" was the ungracious retort, and the girl left with a derisive laugh.

Meanwhile, Grace was tying things in hard knots.

"Isn't Mr. Morford great fun?" she asked, and then without waiting for a reply, continued, "We think it was so splendid of him to cut business and give a whole winter to a special law course. It meant all out-put and no income for

## THE TWO DROMIOS

him, and he had been doing so well, too. But he felt that he wanted to be a step higher in jurisprudence and that he never could be until he had taken that particular degree. But he had a strong incentive, don't you think so?"

"Couldn't have had a stronger, I'm sure," was the hit or miss reply. "Great old chap!"

"Yes, isn't he?" exclaimed Grace with enthusiasm. "Grace is so proud of him, too, and so are all the family. They will be married in June, you know."

"No! Really?"

"Yes; we are all so delighted, for she is just the very wife for him. I've made them promise to come to Live Oaks for at least a week, and if I don't give them the time of their lives. He seems almost like a brother to me, he has been with us girls so much."

"Yes, I dare say he must," then mentally, "who in thunder is she, and who is the fellow she's holding forth about so eloquently I'd like to know. Then aloud: "'Live Oaks' that's a

### THREE GRACES AT COLLEGE

pretty name for a place. Is your home in the South?"

"Yes, in South Carolina."

"Then you must be fond of dancing; all Southern girls are, and our Northern girls are simply not in it with them. May I have the pleasure?"

A waltz was in progress, and the next second Grace was whirling away down the long Gym giving ample testimony of the Southern girl's proficiency in the art which claims so many votaries. Her partner was no mean disciple of Terpsichore, and they made a goodly picture as they swayed about among the other dancers.

He was a splendidly set up fellow, with a fine head well poised upon broad shoulders. A merry, yet firm mouth, straight, clear-cut nose, eyes that could be irresistibly mischievous or deadly earnest in their hazel depths. The closely cropped hair, which had a decided tendency to an independent wave—hence the close cropping—matched the eyes in color.

## THE TWO DROMIOS

Presently they drew near the lower end of the Gym, where, for some inexplicable reason, a greater number of the dancers had unconsciously worked their way, causing one of the jams common to all such assemblies, and forcing "half-time," whether or no.

Grace and her cavalier were laughing gaily over some bit of the college nonsense which Grace was telling, and Mr. Interrogation Point's head was thrown back as a genuine laugh bubbled from his lips, displaying his strong, regular teeth, when the head was suddenly jerked into an upright position by its owner's collision with another couple. The laugh ended abruptly as he exclaimed:

"I *beg* your pardon!"

"Chump!" was the astonishing acknowledgment of the apology, and then all turned to stare at Grace Langford, who had grasped her partner firmly by his coat sleeve, and was demanding tragically:

"Who upon earth *are* you. and *what* have I

### THREE GRACES AT COLLEGE

Her eyes were wide with amazement and dismay was stamped upon her countenance.

"Wallie, my boy, brace up and face the music. You've been at it again, I see," cried Harold Prescott, slapping his twin upon the shoulder.

"I believe I'm myself, and *not* my brother. You've done me the favor of my life, and you've got me for keeps, for I haven't the faintest idea who *you* are, much less that Morford fellow and the Grace you were talking about. Let's all sit down in that window over yonder and get un-snarled. It's a worse mess than the chairs in yonder. Nevertheless, I bless the chairs."

## CHAPTER XIII

### THE USES OF ADVERSITY

“WELL, I should like to know who took those notes!” exclaimed Grace Langford impatiently. “I think she must have been sure enough out of her senses. Just listen to this, Grace. How under the sun am I to use such an utterly idiotic subject for a theme?” and she began to read from the note-book lying upon the desk before her: “Lord, we thank thee for this spark of grass and ask thee to water it.”

“What!” cried Grace Percy, whirling around in her chair. “There is some mistake, Grace. You haven’t read straight.”

“I have, too. Just read it yourself. If that isn’t *grass* I’ll eat it!” She tossed the book across to her room-mate, who glanced at it and broke into a peal of laughter, as she cried:

“Isn’t that just exactly like Molly! Why, she

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means 'Grace,' of course. Now sail right in and write your biblical quote. As a figure of speech that beats anything I ever read or heard of."

It was several days after the Twenty-second frolic, and college had settled down to solid work once more. The two girls were busy with their preparations for the morrow's recitations, and presently only the sound of pens traveling rapidly across paper could be heard. After a little Grace Percy gathered up the sheets of paper before her, arranged them carefully and placed them in her desk. Then taking up several letters she began to read one after the other, as though it were a pleasure which she had held in reserve until more serious matters had been attended to. One after another was run through and replaced in her desk, then came the last, a bulky one, which she opened with a slight exclamation of surprise that caused Grace Langford to glance up and ask:

"What's the matter?"

"Why, it's Florence Colt's letter which Grace gave to me the day mamma and Adalaide came,

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and I've never given it a thought from that day to this. I tell you, Grace, the Two Dromios set my wits wool-gathering."

Grace laughed an odd little laugh, and resumed her writing. Grace Percy opened the letter, spread the voluminous sheets before her, rested her elbows upon the desk, propped her chin upon her hands and prepared for a good, comfortable perusal of Florence Colt's account of all that had happened during the past three months, and what was planned for the months to follow. Grace was deeply interested, for Florence was the first of the Laurel Hill girls to fall beneath little Dan Cupid's darts, and her approaching wedding filled her old friends with the keenest desire for details. Grace smiled now and again as she read, and presently turned the last of the many sheets and found staring her in the face a typewritten page with a business heading. The type was so large that she could not help reading some of it at a glance, and before she was fully aware of what she was doing she



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"It is no use to send to me for any more money! I haven't *got* it. I'm broke. How in thunder do you spend so much?"

Grace crushed the sheet together, and turned scarlet. But it was too late to unlearn the purport of the words she had read, and the poor girl was overwhelmed with confusion. What should she do? Grace Houghton had, of course, given her the letter purely by accident, as the manner in which it was folded with Florence's proved. Grace could not mention it to her, and she dare not allude to it in any way save to say that she had found it with the other. Yet she longed with all her heart to learn the extent of the trouble which was at the back of those ominous words, and also of those which Grace herself had let slip that afternoon in Number 16. She was sure of a serious flaw somewhere, but where?

Since Grace Houghton had returned from Corine's home, where she had passed the Christmas holiday, and where Grace Percy surmised some very gay times indeed had been indulged in, the Allyn House had witnessed some lively revels,

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which would speedily have brought disaster upon the lady in charge had the facts reached the ears of the faculty. But the lady in charge was afflicted with rather weak eyes which required much care, and also affected her hearing more or less. She was a gentle, yielding creature, and this was her first year among the bread-winners of the world. The position had been secured for her through the influence of sympathetic friends, and was liable to be lost through the influence of some other people whose sympathies were less alive to her needs, if matters did not mend with considerable expedition.

The only member of the faculty residing in the Allyn House was a Miss Winchester, of the physiology course, and she was much more alive to the internal workings of frogs than the visible performances of seventy-five or eighty girls. Hence, results.

From her earliest childhood Grace Houghton had been given far more spending money than was wise. New to wealth himself, her father had little true estimate of its value. for his money

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came to him through successful speculations, and it was a case of come easy, go easy. When she was but seven years of age her father was in the habit of taking her upon his knees when he returned to his home in the evening, and asking:

“How’s the exchequer?” the “exchequer” being a beautiful little gold-mounted purse of many divisions. Nine times out of ten the day would have drained the exchequer, and a replenishing was in order—a new penny, a new nickel, a new dime, a new quarter, and a new half dollar. Then he would laugh loudly, kiss her hastily, and bid her “run along and spend the chink.” And the remainder of that night, until daylight did appear, he would spend at some game of chance. Is it any wonder that the child soon came to demand as a right that which had been bestowed as a favor, or that the demand grew with her years? Did it not naturally follow that she should inherit some of her father’s love of speculation?

Bridge whist was in full fever that year, and at

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Corrine's home bridge was doing its best to carry all before it, and meeting with flattering success. Grace had played many times during the previous summer at the big hotel, and had been lucky enough in her winnings to cause her father to chuckle. This winter he was up to his ears in copper speculations, and absorbed in wild dreams of incalculable wealth. When Corrine and Grace returned to Ardwell they soon gathered a select little coterie about them, and bridge begun with pennies soon resolved itself into bridge ending with dollars, and many more things took place under the roof of the Allyn than its lady in charge dreamed of. Grace Percy suspected that something was amiss with Grace Houghton, but would not ask any questions. Indeed, she well knew how useless it would be to do so, yet she was confident from Grace's manner that something was radically wrong. She had seen very little of Grace since Mrs. Percy's visit, and could not help feeling that the girl was doing all she could to avoid her, notwithstanding her very genuine pleasure at being with her old

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friends while Mrs. Percy and Adalaide were visiting at the Evans House. Mrs. Percy had been anxious to learn something of Grace Houghton, but Grace had rather shrunk from saying anything to her mother, since there was very little that she could say in Grace's favor. And now this tormenting letter was the climax to her anxieties, for it told just enough to alarm her, but she was not at liberty to read further and possibly untangle the snarl. As she sat pondering over it all and wondering what step to take next, a tap came upon her door, and a maid opened it to hand her a note. Grace took it, and her heart beat more quickly when she recognized Grace's characteristic scrawl. Breaking the seal, she read:

"Dear old comrade, can you give me half an hour? I need you. GRACE."

"There is no answer," was all Grace said to the waiting-maid.

Grace Langford looked up and raised her eyebrows inquiringly.

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"I've got to go out for a little while, Gay girlie. I'll be back soon," were Grace's words for this friend, while a fear filled her heart for the friend in the Allyn. She could not explain even to Grace Langford. As she left the room Grace Langford's eyes were wonderfully tender, and she said softly under her breath:

"She's just pure gold, that child," for this Grace was by no means a bat.

Grace Percy hurried across the campus, and was met at the door of the Allyn House by the lachrymose Mrs. Walie.

"Oh, my dear, you are Miss Houghton's friend, are you not? I am *so* relieved to see you. I really do not know what to do, or *how* to appreciate these vehement natures. They shock me so *very* painfully. I have never encountered discord in my life, and its presence near me wounds me as the thrust of a *dag-ger*. Pray use your influence with this unchastened child."

"Whv. what has hannened. Mrs. Walie?"

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"I do not know; I dare not conjecture; I have sought to soothe and calm; I have implored her to pray for tranquillity."

Grace did not tarry to hint that it might be as well for Mrs. Walie to pray for a little common sense upon her own part, but she thought it as she hurried up to No. 16. She tapped at the door, and was greeted by:

"Well, what *now?*" in a tone which, in spite of her anxiety, brought a smile to Grace's lips, for well she knew that the speaker believed Mrs. Walie to be the one seeking admittance.

"It's Grace, dear," she hastened to say, and the next instant the door was flung wide open, and she was drawn forcefully within a room which looked as though a tornado had passed through it.

"I thought it was that *fool* woman again, and I believe I'd choke her if she were to come whining around me again," stormed Grace, as she slammed and locked the door. "If she isn't the *limit* I'd like to know who is. *If* you could have

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heard her imploring me to *pray for grace and tranquillity* when I should have exploded without my safety-valve of words. Idiot! Idiot! Idiot!"

Grace Percy quietly laid aside her golf cape, pushed a hassock near a low chair, and pointing to it, said:

"You need me, Grace, dear. What can I do for you? Tell me all you care to and let me do what I can to help. You know that I shall be glad to." She sat down and waited for Grace to speak.

"I know that well enough. I never doubted it for a moment, in spite of—well, everything. If I'd doubted I shouldn't have sent for you now. You are the only one on earth I *could* send for, because you are the only one who has never said, and never *will say*, 'How can you!' 'Of course, I told you so.' You know there's a demon way down inside of me, and how he came there, too, and you know it's no use for any one to try to pray him out. If he ever *is* ousted, *I've* got to superintend the seance. When that woman



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came up here with her tears and her platitudes it made me think of something which happened years ago. I was a youngster then, but I remember it as distinctly as though it all happened yesterday. Mamma and I were going to a summer resort in New Hampshire, and the train broke down at a little hamlet in the mountains. It was about seven o'clock in the evening, and we had to wait at the place hours. A little way down the road a tent had been pitched, and a lot of people were gathered there to pray a devil out of a half-witted boy. Some of the passengers from the train walked over to see what was going on, and, if possible, to see that devil take flight. The people at the meeting were all ranged round in a circle, with that poor child in the center of it, and he certainly looked miserable enough. I may as well tell you right now that his particular devil took the form of a serious impediment in his speech; I don't believe he had any hitch in his morals. Well, they worked themselves into a great state of excitement, one after another ex-

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horting and shouting. Way over at the farther side of the tent sat a little hunch-backed boy, and pretty soon his face began to look ghastly white. I don't know whether it was terror or exhaustion. Anyway, he slipped unnoticed from his camp-stool and began to crawl on his hands and knees toward a swaying flap of the tent. He was about to go through to fresh air and freedom when the object of the prayers spied him, and springing to his feet cried out:

“ ‘I’m a’ ’unky! I’m a’ ’unky! Thar go d’v’l —tha’ go! Tha’ go! Now go ’long n’ l-l-lemme lone! I wa’ go bed! A’ve been pe—pe—pestered n-n-nigh ter d-d-death!’ ”

Grace’s powers of mimicry had been given full play in this recital, and Grace Percy’s laughter pealed through the room. It was the burst of sunshine needed. Grace Houghton paused in her wild ranging about the room, dropped upon the hassock at Grace’s feet, laid her head in that faithful friend’s lap, and said in the tone of a weary, frazzled child:

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"Smooth it, Gracie, there's a dear. Rub out some of the perplexities and kinks and wrath that is threatening to rend it apart."

Grace gathered the poor, buffeted head into her arms, and stroked and smoothed for nearly half an hour, while silence filled the room.

## CHAPTER XIV

### FOR FRIENDSHIP'S SAKE

No sound broke the stillness of the room save the ticking of Corrine's little French clock as it told of the passing moments. Far away down the corridor a maid was singing as she dusted, and Grace found herself unconsciously following the gay little tune, as our subconscious thoughts often grasp details of trivial matters when we are keyed to a high tension over greater concerns. Grace Houghton's head lay in Grace's lap, and the gentle, even strokes of the cool, slender fingers seemed to act as a sedative to the overwrought girl, whose eyes closed and whose breathing became so regular that it seemed as though she slept. Grace Percy did not break the silence, but let its influence have full sway. Presently, without the least preintimation, and ap-

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parently apropos of nothing whatever, Grace Houghton said:

"Thank the Lord, I can act! D'Argent said he would be glad to see me any time." She paused, but Grace, who knew her so well, kept silent, sure that the moment was not ripe for her to speak. Grace Houghton evidently did not expect any comment, and continued:

"Wonder what Corrine will say when she finds out that she will be obliged to take an I. O. U. or nothing? Great, isn't it, the way Fate snarls things up? Last semester I was her banker, and she was paid on demand, and the demand was not modest. This one she has been mine; turn about is fair play, you know, and I really don't know just how much I do owe her. Pretty sizable sum, however. Good joke, isn't it?" and a laugh so filled with bitterness that it chilled Grace Percy's heart sprung to Grace's lips. "Instead of cultivating me she will dock me leaf and branch, see if she doesn't. Root me entirely out of her affections, maybe. Heigh-ho! It's all in a lifetime. Won't it seem queer to

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hustle round for myself? Wonder what sort of hand I'll make at self-support. Lots of the girls are self-supporting, but, ugh! I don't relish *their* way of scratching along. I've got to make one plunge and land what I need, or—sink. I think I have the magnificent balance of \$87 to my credit in the Ardwell bank, and my respected parent has paid my fees up to the end of the first semester. He has been gently urged to attend to the little matter of \$300 for this one, and has done so—with a protested check.” Grace Percy smothered an exclamation, and Grace Houghton nodded, but made no comment. “Not a cent to meet it. Ditto the check for my allowance. I wrote to him several times, but got no reply after a letter which came about two weeks ago, in which I was soundly berated for spending so much, and telling me that I could have no more. What became of that letter is a mystery to me. I have searched high and low for it, but it has vanished completely. I ought not grieve over its loss, for it certainly was not overflowing with maternal affection. Still, it might be useful

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to have it in case my word fails to carry due weight. No, not a line have I received since then, and this morning I found this interesting item upon my desk, doubtless put there by my devoted friend, Corrine, as a delicate little attention."

Grace sprang to her feet, caught up a newspaper from her desk, and thrust it into Grace's hands. She read:

"The suspension of the firm of Houghton & Co., stock brokers, of — Broad St., whose dealings in and manipulation of copper have been the sensation of the speculative world for many months, was announced to-day. The announcement came at the close of a long decline in the price of future contracts. Some weeks ago on heavy buying, believed to have been more of a manipulative than of an investment character, the price for future delivery was pushed above all previous records, and predictions were made by those in charge of the bull campaign that a still higher mark would be reached.

"These predictions, however, were never

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realized, and when the bull pool tried to realize some of its paper profits it found that the bears had 'taken the market,' and in one afternoon there was a drop in prices which meant ruin for many.

"It was about this time that Mr. Houghton gave out a statement that he was going South for a much-needed rest. It is assumed that the gentleman is taking it, since he is not to be found either at his place of business, his club, or his hotel, nor have the warmest of friendly inquiries succeeded in obtaining the least clue to his whereabouts. The Continent *has* been known to restore overtaxed nerves, and possibly Mr. Houghton changed his mind at the last moment, and took an ocean voyage. Those interested in his liabilities, which amount to millions, would be glad to learn."

Then followed a sketch of Mr. Houghton's life and career, embellished as only a newspaper can embellish such reports, and at its conclusion allusions were made to some of his wild plunging at various watering-places. "where the gentleman



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and his stunning daughter could always be seen at the height of the season."

Grace Percy read to the end, laid the paper aside, and said in a tone so exactly like Mrs. Percy's that tears sprung to Grace Houghton's eyes:

"Oh, my dear, *dear* little girl! I am so, so sorry."

"Don't you suppose I *knew* you would be!" cried Grace, with a catch in her voice. "Didn't I *know* you would come with your loyal friendship, your sympathy, and your advice if I wanted to ask it. And yet, way down in the bottom of my heart, don't I marvel that you can come at all? *That* is what puzzles me in your make-up, Grace. That you can let me go on time after time hurting you and wounding you—think of Laurel Hill, of your Wordsworth paper, of my leaving the Evans House, of the downright insults I've more than once forced upon you this year—the things I've said, and yet I *know* I can turn to you in a crisis as to no other living soul, and what is more, that you'll *never*

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fail me. Is it because you know that my devilishness is chronic? That I simply *can't* help it, and that what was bred in the bone and cultivated in the flesh *must* find a vent in some direction. And yet, Grace, darling, *why* must I flay *you* ? ”

She dropped upon her knees beside Grace Percy, clasped her arms about her neck and rested her face against her friend's.

“ I've done so hundreds of times, and I'm *sure* to do so hundreds more. You know it and I know it. Yet you hold as my sheet-anchor.”

Grace kissed the white forehead, and said, smiling through the tears which filled her eyes:

“ ‘ Love is not love which alters when it alteration finds,’ and there is so much in you that you yourself never suspect, Grace. Now sit here and let us talk it all over quietly. This matter has got to be looked to, and without a moment's delay. Are you willing to tell me exactly how you stand regarding money matters; you know I am not asking for mere curiosity, I'm sure.” A slight color crept into her cheeks.

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"Curiosity! Nonsense! I know you are asking because you would like to hand over your check-book, and say, 'Square up everything,' but I tell you right now that it is no use. I sha'n't let you help me. I got into this mess with my eyes wide open, and I shall get out of it the best way I can."

"Hush! You promised to listen to my words of wisdom. Give me that pad and pencil, and let me put things down in black and white."

She took the scratch pad and carefully wrote down every item as Grace named it. It proved a pretty formidable array of belligerent figures for a girl in her twentieth year to deal with unaided. Grace Houghton took the paper, looked at it a moment, and then said in a bitter tone:

"Tidy little sum for a bankrupt to settle, isn't it?"

Over seven hundred dollars to be paid, and how?

"Grace, you *must* let us help you; father and me, I mean. It is entirely too large a sum for you to undertake without help, and you shall not.

## FOR FRIENDSHIP'S SAKE

Moreover, you must learn where your father is, and try to get him to do his share of this."

"Well, you're up against the prettiest job you ever tried to handle, that's all I can tell you. Why, Grace, you don't know that man even a little bit. Did you ever try to squeeze blood out of a turnip? You'd be more successful at that than in making my father do a single thing he didn't want to do. He's a piece of work, is that man, let me tell you, as I learned during my past two gay and brilliant seasons. No, girlie, give *that* up. Little Gracie Houghton has got to paddle her own canoe in future, and hustle about it, too, and the sooner she starts at it the better. Now listen: I've already written to D'Argent and told him I've decided to drop college for a time. I said I wished to see him, and, if possible, get a position right off. He knows what I can do, for he has seen me do it time and again. His reply came promptly, and I'm going to-morrow; hence the upheaval in my domains. I also wrote to your father and told him a business matter, which I would explain later, called me to

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New York, and asked if he and the dear mater would shelter their 'comrade' for a little while. Read that! It's enough to make one willing to read that newspaper stuff, which I don't for a second doubt they, too, have read, although, God bless them, they don't say a single word about it."

She took a note from the blouse of her shirt-waist, where she had tucked it away, and handed it to Grace. It ran:

—WEST 79TH ST.

"MY LITTLE COMRADE:

"The 'dear Mater' and I will expect you on Friday by the 5.40 P. M. Boston Express. 'Watch out' for a familiar face at the Grand Central, for one of us will surely be there, most probably Daniel, for he is to spend the night with us, and will be delighted to stop on his way up to make valuable collections for our household.

"We all rejoice at the thought of having you with us for a time, and want you to freely call upon us for any service we can render.

## FOR FRIENDSHIP'S SAKE

"The Mater and Isabel send their love, and I shall claim the privilege of my years to send my own also.

"Always faithfully yours,  
"LAURENCE V. PERCY."

"Dear old Daddykins," said Grace softly, then continued: "So be it. Now we must act. Let me help you pack, and while we are doing it, do you tell me what I can do for you up here in Ardwell."

At the end of an hour order was restored, and Grace's belongings were ready for the expressman. Then Grace Percy made a careful memorandum of several matters she could attend to, and arranged to settle some of the minor bills due in the town, a point which Grace Houghton conceded only after "logic had been hammered into her," as Grace Percy protested.

"Give me I. O. U.'s, or any old thing you want to, if it will set your mind at rest, but *don't* leave this town in debt to any of the tradespeople, or to Corrine, above all others. The col-

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lege fees are a different matter entirely. The head of things up here will understand and sympathize with you, and also stand ready to help. Your first semester is settled for, thank goodness, and you've only worked half of this one, anyway. You *must* do as I say. I can spare the money as well as not, and you can square accounts when you are able to. Now put on your things and come over to the Evans for dinner and the night. Mrs. Willow-Walie will be only too glad to get you out of her house, and I'll make it all right with Mrs. Fox."

"Whew! What a whirlwind we can be for a gentle spring zephyr," exclaimed Grace, the light, bantering tone failing completely to disguise the relief in voice, face, and manner. "I'll come."

## CHAPTER XV

### “OUR GREATEST GLORY”

“‘Our greatest glory is not in never failing, but in rising every time we fail,’” were Mr. Percy’s words, as he paced slowly up and down his study, his hands clasped behind him, his head slightly bent, and a half-sad, half-perplexed expression upon his kind face.

Grace Houghton sat in a low chair before the cheerful open fire, her chin propped upon her hands, her elbows resting upon her knees, as she watched the flames dance and waited for Mr. Percy to speak. They had been talking for a long time, and Grace, to use her own words, had “made a clean breast of the whole affair,” for she fully realized that in order to advise understandingly, Mr. Percy must know all the facts. It was past eleven o’clock, and all the other members of the family had retired knowing that



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Grace would feel freer if alone with the friend whose friendship she so valued.

Grace had arrived at the Grand Central station that evening, and been met by Daniel Morford, who escorted her to the Percy home and entertained her *en route* with a characteristic account of the family happenings. Her warm welcome by Mr. and Mrs. Percy left no shadow of doubt of their delight at seeing her, and a merry dinner, with Daniel Morford's fun as an appetizer, dispelled any restraint. Early in the evening Mrs. Percy tactfully suggested that Grace and Mr. Percy should go to the latter's study in order to discuss the business matter which had called her to town so abruptly.

Then followed a long, earnest talk, and Mr. Percy's quotation which opened this chapter. Presently he paused in his walk to ask:

"Are you willing to have me speak to Daniel about this, Grace? I shall not, of course, try to conceal from you that we have seen the newspaper reports, and discussed them more or less, but I shall not mention your private affairs with-

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out your consent. Yet I urge you to take him into your confidence. Independent of the affection which we all feel for him, I consider him an exceptional man and a shrewd adviser, for he has a keenly comprehensive mind and his sense of justice is his strongest point.”

“I shall be glad to have you speak to him, Mr. Percy. I feel singularly helpless in some respects, although courageous enough in others. You see I have never before in all my life known what it meant to lack financial resources, although, Heaven knows, I’ve been restricted enough in some other directions. But until recently my bank account has been solid enough.”

“Yes, exactly. And it is that point I wish to discuss with Daniel. He will be very liable to see a line of action of which I should never even think. I fear I am far from shrewd as a business man, and that nature planned me for a dreamer of pretty dreams, some of which, thanks to this dear son-to-be, I’ve been able to see realized. He is a great comfort to me, this dear lad, God bless him.”

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There was a pause, and then Mr. Percy came back to realities with a start.

"Now run straight away to your bed, my dear. I am depriving you of your beauty sleep entirely. Good night, and the happiest of dreams."

Mr. Percy laid the whole matter of Grace's affairs before Daniel Morford, who, scenting a wrong to be righted, became as keen over it as a war-horse which sniffs powder.

"Say, Mr. Percy, can you tell me why men like that Houghton fellow are turned loose upon the world? By George! it does seem as though they were born to get other folks into trouble and then skin out slick as a beaver themselves. Now it seems to me that that little girl has had about all the hustling around that she's entitled to. My Lord, I wonder she's half the little woman she is. For sixteen years she was shunted and boosted about from one boarding-school to another; any old place to get her out of the way. Then came that calamity down South, and now here's 'her awful dad.' Say, she could take a part in that play and do it to the

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life, couldn't she? Wonder why Europe couldn't have proved big enough to hold him for all time? It wasn't a mite of use for him to come back to his dear native land just to go broke in it and establish a general, all-round smash-up, was it? Wonder, by the way, if he *did* go broke? Wouldn't wonder if that was what it is *my* business to find out. Happy thought! Book it," and several notes were rapidly written in a fat notebook. Then the queer, half-earnest, half-joking comments were continued. "Chances are that he has transferred a tidy sum over the deep blue seas, and is ruffling it in great shape over there this very minute. *Some one* will have to take a brotherly interest in that man and trot right along after him to see that he doesn't overdraw his account. I've got it! He doesn't know me from a hole in the ground. Never saw me that I know of, and I'll bet a dollar bill he could trip and fall over Isabel without recognizing her, for she was down visiting mother the first time he honored you with his presence, and head over ears in that training-school work when he again

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hove in sight. It isn't too late to alter the course of that little outing we're planning for June, and 'we'll sail the ocean blue,' with Isabel's consent, instead of doing Yankee land and Dixie's land." Jumping from his chair he opened the door to call:

"Isabel!"

"What's wanted?" came a cheerful response.

"My trump card."

"The Queen of Hearts, myself, of course," was the audacious retort.

"Oh, I say, the dear little violet isn't in it with you, is it? Come here and let me check some of your overpowering self-conceit, young lady. Your services are needed in 'furrin' lands, for Justice is in danger of having the bottom knocked clean out of her scales unless you agree to smite her assailants. Do you feel vigorous?"

"What *are* you getting at, you man of many words? Just look at father; he's on the point of fainting this minute, and all because you've nearly talked him into a state of collapse, I'm sure."

## “OUR GREATEST GLORY”

“It’s a base slander! Isn’t it, Mr. Percy?”

“Don’t expect me to fly to my certain destruction by coming between a man and his wife-to-be,” laughed Mr. Percy. “If I get snarled up in a squabble now, what must I expect later?”

“Peace and tranquillity forever after,” was Isabel’s bantering reply, as she leaned over the back of her father’s chair to kiss his silvery hair.

“What did you want of me, anyway?”

“Do you feel in a sisterly frame of mind toward your fellow-*men*?” asked Daniel.

“Perhaps toward my fellow-*beings*; depends upon who they are.”

“I said fellow-*men*. It is your duty to take up a crusade, and I’m going to see that you begin pretty quick. Sit right down beside that blessed daddy of yours and listen to reason.”

He forced her gently into a chair beside Mr. Percy’s, touched her forehead ever so lightly and tenderly as he lifted back into place a stray lock of her hair which had escaped from its comb, and as he did so a wonderfully soft light crept into his eyes, and the expression which over-

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spread his face promised much for the girl before him. Then dropping the joking tone completely, he spoke earnestly of the matter before them, and before the conversation ended it was decided that the wedding journey planned for June should be over the sea instead of about their own country.

The following Monday morning Grace Houghton, accompanied by Mrs. Percy, called at D'Argent's office, and an hour was given over to a business talk which ended in Grace's arranging to take a position with the Jefferson Square Company. One of the cast was shortly to marry, and thus leave a vacancy which D'Argent was looking about to fill, and he was quick to see that Grace was exactly the one to fill it. The salary which he offered her was really a liberal one for an amateur to command upon her first step into the professional world, but D'Argent was a shrewd man, and knew what he was doing. He had followed Grace's dramatic work since he had seen her take the character of Katharine in her freshman year, and recognized her possibilities.

## “OUR GREATEST GLORY”

It would, however, be two weeks before she could take up the work, and the interval was to be devoted to hard study and the preparation of the necessary costumes. During this interval Ardwell's spring recess began, and Grace Percy's home-coming made another diversion. Grace Langford flew away south to pipe with the birds.

Grace Percy had been home but a day or two, and they were all seated at the dinner-table one evening when Daniel Morford announced:

“Oh, Grace, I came mighty near forgetting an important message with which I was entrusted for you this morning.”

“A message for me?” echoed Grace.

Daniel nodded.

“Well, why don't you deliver it then?”

“Because I'm hanged if I can tell who sent it, and when I do a thing I like to do it in good shape.”

“You don't know who sent it? Don't you know the person who gave it?”

“Don't know whether I do or not. Some-



### THREE GRACES AT COLLEGE

times I think I do, and then, just as I get it all nicely settled in my mind, I discover I've treed the wrong coon."

"Daniel Morford, what *are* you talking about? What has all that got to do with the message for me? Tell it at once!"

"Well, as near as I can make out, a man is coming up to call on you—with your permission, and if *I sesso*—next Wednesday evening, and I'm to let him know over the 'phone if it will be agreeable to the lady to receive him. But how the deuce I'm to let him know when I don't know which fellow I'm to send my message to stumps me!" cried Daniel, with a perplexed wag of his head.

"I know! It's Mabel Prescott's brother," cried Grace.

"Not the least doubt of it in the world, if he has a sister and her name's Mabel. But what I'd like to find out is whether it was Tweedledum or Tweedledee."

"Why, it was Harold, of course," said Grace innocently.

## “OUR GREATEST GLORY”

“Why ‘of course’?” instantly demanded the astute Daniel, a twinkle in his gray eyes.

“Why—” began Grace lamely, “I met him at Ardwell——”

“And incidentally his brother, too, young lady,” burst in her prospective brother-in-law. “Isabel, I smell a mouse; I see it in the air; I’ll nip it in the bud!”

“You absurd thing!” exclaimed Grace, laughing in spite of herself. “You think because you’ve got your head in the clouds that every one else’s must be there too. I scarcely spoke to Wallace Prescott, but Harold was very pleasant. Perhaps it was because he discoursed eloquently upon the merits of a certain Daniel Morford,” was the wicked rejoinder, which heaped coals of fire upon that individual’s head.

“Shall I hale him forth, then?” asked that contrite mortal.

“What sort of a man is he, Dan?” asked Grace seriously, for she liked a bit of a guarantee with the men she welcomed in her home.

“One of the cleanest, whitest fellows I ever

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met," was the prompt answer. "I got to know him first-rate last year at old Colum., and found him O. K. through and through. I've only one thing against him, but I guess I'll have to let that pass; I never know whether he's himself or the other fellow. I don't know the other fellow so well, and sometimes sort of mess things up by stringing out a lot of law stuff to him, and finding out after I've wasted all my wind that I've been trying to stuff justice into an M. D., when everybody knows that it is no sort of use; they're all ready to cure a well man."

## CHAPTER XVI

### GRACE HOUGHTON'S TALENT

WHEN the two weeks of study and preparation were ended Grace Houghton began her professional work in earnest. The play running was one of those indescribably funny comedies given by the Jefferson Square Stock Company. Bright, clean, sparkling, and utterly absurd in many of its situations, it held the interest of the audience from beginning to end. Grace took the part of Pretty Peggy, a young country girl, who was supposed to be a novice in city ways, but who proved by no means the fool some were inclined to believe her.

Mr. and Mrs. Percy, Isabel, and Daniel went down to see her initial performance, and could not help marveling at the girl's ability.

"She was wise in her choice," asserted Mr. Percv. as he arose from his seat at the close of

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the last act and made his way to the stage door to meet Grace.

"That's true! Certain as the world," assented Daniel Morford. "She has given us pretty good proof of that to-night. Now all we've got to do is to look out for the little girl, and I guess three of us can manage that all right enough."

And "look out" they did, these good people, for, loyal to their friendships, as to all things else, one or the other invariably escorted Grace to the theater, and brought her home when her duties were over. At first she protested, and declared she would not hear of it, and that she meant to live near the theater, but Mr. Percy quietly overruled her objections, and made the matter so clear to her that the question was let drop for all time. Furthermore, she was made to feel that she was conferring a real favor by making their home hers.

And so the days slipped away, and from time to time checks made their way to Ardwell, where Grace Percy acted as steward, and when June came one girl had the satisfaction and pleasure

## GRACE HOUGHTON'S TALENT

of knowing that another's record was rapidly clearing.

Then came the farewell entertainment to be given by the Sigma Phi, and pretty it was, too. The idea originated with Grace Percy, and she carried it through with pronounced success. She wrote a one-act play which she called A Twentieth Century Mother Goose, in which she brought in some fad or pronounced characteristic of each member of Sigma Phi, under cover of Mary, Mary, quite contrary, Primrose Hill, In the night-time, Little Miss Moffett, etc. When this was numbered among things past, examinations began to fill minds with serious thoughts and hearts with serious beats.

The weather was now all that weather could be, and night after night the soft strains of the Ivy music came floating through the windows of the Evans House as the two Graces delved away at examination papers, and one Grace's thoughts often wandered away to the Allyn House, where a double room now had but one occupant. Grace Percy missed her friend more than any one sus-

### THREE GRACES AT COLLEGE

pected, and when the Junior-Senior reception took place felt that much for which she had hoped and planned junior year had been denied her.

That year the seniors gave Twelfth Night, and great preparations had been made. Both the Graces were ushers, and darted about placing their charges, for aunts, uncles and cousins blundered into places intended for other people, and, as Grace Langford put it, "I didn't know whether to use my wand or my wits to oust them."

Grace Houghton managed to get away from New York for a flying visit to Ardwell, in company with Mr. and Mrs. Percy, Isabel, and Daniel, but could not remain for Commencement, owing to her professional duties. But even that glimpse of her was a comfort to Grace Percy. They stole away from the others for a few moments and wandered out under the old apple-trees, which had been eavesdroppers to more secrets than any one guessed. There Grace Percy stopped, laid both hands upon Grace's shoulders, and asked:

"Which is it to be, Grace?"

## GRACE HOUGHTON'S TALENT

Something of the old, defiant, secretive look flashed across Grace's face for one instant, to be replaced by a gentler, more womanly expression than Grace Percy had ever seen there, as she asked:

"Have you any idea how much that question means to me, Grace?"

"Yes, I think I have. If I had not thought about it pretty seriously I should not have dared write to you as I did, nor should I dare ask you now," said Grace Percy.

Grace drew away and cast herself into a near-by hammock. Grace Percy dropped upon the grass just in front of her. Neither girl spoke for several minutes. Then Grace Houghton began:

"Grace, do you realize that I shall probably always have to earn my own livelihood? Daniel has not been able to learn a single thing of my father's whereabouts, nor get one farthing for me. *That* you already know, but there is something you do not know, and which you probably never will. I hope not anyway. *That* is



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just how a girl learns to look upon life when she has to face it unaided. It is all so different then, dear."

Grace's hand had stolen toward Grace Percy's, where it was firmly clasped, but she was not interrupted.

"Yes, so *very* different," she continued in a low voice. "The world is such a big place sometimes, and then again so small. One's point of view changes entirely when one gets to know it. I have been in this workaday world barely three months, yet even in that brief time I have had some lessons, learned a great deal, and seen a new phase of life. I can hardly make you understand it, Grace, you are so sheltered here and in your home. The college world is a little one all to itself; your home world is—paradise. You know it in a way, but you would have to be thrown wholly upon your own resources and come into contact with that big outer world to fully understand it. My position in it is unusual, for, even though I am forced to earn my daily bread, and probably always shall be, I have a

## GRACE HOUGHTON'S TALENT

shelter to return to when the work is ended, thanks to your blessed father and mother. They are so much to me, Grace! Oh, *so much!*"

She ceased speaking, and looked off toward the blue mountain with the sunset glow behind it, then resumed:

"I never knew how much until I began this work, for even though I love it I am not blind to its shadows, and they can be very dark ones, indeed, if a woman permits them to be, or just the lapses of sunshine which teach one to value the sun when it shines again. It rests largely with the woman. Your father and mother, Grace, have helped me to understand this. I know the big world better than I did. And now you ask me which it is to be. I can not tell you yet; I *dare* not. I long to come back here next year and graduate with you and Grace, but in order to do that I must study hard this summer. Meanwhile, I must *live*, too, Grace, and I may never again have such an opportunity as this one just offered me. It will mean three months in England. and the salary would keep me at

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college all next winter; yet, if I *go* how can I work up for senior year exams? And if I do *not* go how shall I pay for senior year if I work up for it?"

"Grace, you know father——" began Grace Percy, when Grace Houghton's hand was placed firmly over her mouth.

"Stop! It is no use, Grace. I can't do that. Put it aside for all time. And there is another side to the question. Ought I give up this chance, and will another year at Ardwell be of any real benefit to me in my chosen career? I can't answer it now. Come!" She sprang to her feet, and slipping her arms through Grace's, started briskly toward College Hall. Grace said no more. Why did she feel so young in Grace Houghton's presence? Why did Grace seem so much more mature in thought and action after so brief a separation? Grace felt instinctively that the wayward, petulant, capricious Grace of Laurel Hill; the restless, unsettled, high-spirited Grace of freshman year; the lawless, vindictive, defiant Grace of sophomore year, and the reck-

## GRACE HOUGHTON'S TALENT

less, cynical, outraged, yet still unconquered, Grace of this junior year now ending, had passed from her life forever, and in her place stood a woman years older in life's experiences, and holding within her grasp life's possibilities to be weighed by no one but herself.

Grace returned to New York with Daniel Morford that evening, leaving the rest of the party for Baccalaureate, Ivy Day, and all that makes Commencement what it is.

The days which followed were more than busy ones, for Isabel's wedding would take place on the twenty-second, and all had been bustle and preparation for many weeks. Much to Grace Langford's disappointment, the wedding trip would be over the sea, where Daniel Morford meant to leave no stone unturned which could bring to light some knowledge of Grace Houghton's father, for his soul rebelled at the thought of his conduct toward this only child.

Grace Langford accompanied her friends to New York, and remained with them until after the ceremony, protesting against the change of

### THREE GRACES AT COLLEGE

plans until the train whirled her away toward her home.

It was a pretty, quiet little church wedding, with the three Graces for bridesmaids and Adalaide as maid of honor, and both Mr. and Mrs. Percy felt that a blessing had come into their home with this new son. Daniel Morford and his wife were to spend a few days at Trenton with his father and mother, and then sail for Europe. Meanwhile Mr. and Mrs. Percy were doing all within their power for Grace Houghton's comfort.

It had been fully decided that she should accept the offer made her by the Jefferson Square Company to go abroad with them for a three months' tour of the English towns, after which other plans would be made, and she could remain with the company or return to the States, as she saw fit. Everything had been most carefully arranged by Mr. Percy and Daniel, who, notwithstanding his approaching wedding-day, was the same practical, unselfish Daniel, and ready to do anything he could for Grace's well-being.

## CHAPTER XVII

### MR. HOUGHTON'S LAST PAGE IS TURNED

WHEN the twenty-ninth of June dawned all was bustle in the pretty apartment in West Seventy-ninth Street, for three members of that household were about to flit away from the home nest, and each succeeding day would increase the number of miles dividing them from those they were leaving behind.

"Grace, dear, have you your medicine-case in your steamer trunk, and that little roll of flannel I put with it, and plenty of handkerchiefs, and the guide-book Daniel brought you, and——"

"Some new shoe-lacings, and a pound of crackers—they may have forgotten to lay in a supply on the Oceanic," broke in Grace Percy, as she hurried through the room with an armful of steamer rugs. "Here, Daddykins, strap these with your strong right arm—no. with the

### THREE GRACES AT COLLEGE

strap, but use your strong right arm to do the pulling."

"Yes, little Mater, I think I have everything, and a little to spare, thanks to you," replied Grace Houghton, as she snapped the lock of the steamer trunk before which she was kneeling, and then sprung to her feet to gather Mrs. Percy into her arms, and whisper:

"If I could *only* put you in and take you along with me the step would be shorn of all its terrors for me, for sometimes London seems a long, long way off, and I'm *not* very ancient."

"Keep a brave heart, dear. We have great faith in our little Thalia. You have chosen wisely. Do your best and leave the rest to the dear Lord."

"I will. Now we must get started or Daniel and Isabel will be frantic."

Twenty minutes later a carriage rolled away from — Seventy-ninth Street, bearing to the White Star dock the girl who dared face the world and the good friends who were helping fit her to do so. As the carriage drew up at the

## MR. HOUGHTON'S LAST PAGE

gangway Daniel Morford opened the door, and said:

“Come along, foster-sister; I’ve got a little girl up yonder who is beginning to fidget about you. Be careful of that step, father, and you two girls keep the little mother from taking measurements of the gangplank. Now, up you all go. Here we are, all on deck after all. Isabel, you and the little mother toddle right off to our stateroom, for I know I’m not in these last secrets. You girls come with me, and help settle our ‘star’ in her quarters. You come, too, father, for you’ll feel easier if you see where I’m going to tuck her away. Wish we could have gotten our rooms closer together, but she won’t be out of sight. Not yet, anyway. Going to wait until she appears as Pretty Peggy over yonder,” with a nod of his head toward the Statue of Liberty down the bay, and bustling, directing, and talking, as though a trip over the sea were an every-day occurrence, and figuring in the rôle of a week old bridegroom quite a matter-of-course. he settled all things for everybody.



### THREE GRACES AT COLLEGE

and a half hour later, when the "All ashore!" was heard, became the serious, chivalrous son, brother, and husband.

Farewells were said, the friends returned to the shore, and the great ship drew slowly away from its moorings. The little group on the dock, waving their handkerchiefs, looked upon a picture which dwelt in their hearts and minds for many days. High above them on the deck of the huge vessel stood a tall, finely set-up man of thirty, strength and vigor in every line of his figure, power in the firm, smiling face, and a wonderfully tender light in his brave eyes. Well and carefully dressed, he looked the true *gentleman* he was. Close to his side stood a tall, graceful young woman, her cheeks slightly flushed, her eyes bright with unshed tears, her pretty, sunny hair blowing about in the wind. One hand rested upon the rail, with the man's strong one protectingly over it, as though to prove to those they were leaving behind his right to guard it henceforth. At the man's right side stood another figure, erect, head magnificently poised,

## MR. HOUGHTON'S LAST PAGE

dark, wavy hair tightly coiled beneath a steamer-cap, and eyes that shone like stars. She waved and kissed both hands to those she was leaving and looked all she was: the personification of brave young American womanhood.

Presently the people upon the dock became specks, the dock itself dropped from sight, the great bay opened before them, and then the Narrows, too, were left behind. As the ocean swell began to rock the huge ship, gently as a mother rocks a cradle, Grace Houghton turned to Daniel and said:

"They say it is bad luck to watch anything, or anybody, out of sight. I am going to my stateroom to lie down for a while. I am beginning to realize how tired I am, and—Isabel needs her husband's companionship just now." She gave them an odd little smile and left them.

Daniel Morford turned to his wife to ask:

"Is it true, sweetheart? Can the new husband compensate for all the tried and true dear ones you are leaving behind? Can he fill the new life so full that love will leave no room for a heart-

### THREE GRACES AT COLLEGE

ache? God bless you, my wife; he will try. Let me get your steamer-chair for you." A slight catch came into his voice as he spoke the last words and hurried away with averted face. Isabel's eyes followed him, and her sweet lips murmured: "May I be worthy."

Then the weeks fled away as they can flee but once in a lifetime, and when Daniel Morford and Isabel returned to America early in September the former carried with him all that was left to tell the story of one wrecked life which had been brought to a tragic end at Monte Carlo; that burying-ground for many a derelict upon Life's tempest-tossed seas. Grace learned from him that her father had died there early in May, but this good friend was careful to soften the details of the wretched story of this ruined career.

Grace had returned to New York the last week in August, sailing from Liverpool a month earlier than she had expected to owing to a change made in the company's plans. They decided to go out to the colonies, but Grace felt that she could not put the world between herself and the only

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ones she loved. Her trip had been successful in every way, and she returned to America with her purse very comfortably replenished. Her company would remain abroad a year or possibly longer, and upon their return to New York wished her to rejoin them. So all was shaping well. Now but one question confronted her: Could she go back to Ardwell? Would it be possible to make up the lost time and overtake her class? A pretty serious one to answer. Well, a month lay before her; she was in perfect health, happier than she had ever been she believed, and when she joined the Percy family at Green's Farms, where they were passing that summer, she found in Grace and Mr. Percy a very tower of strength and fountain of knowledge. So she plunged headlong into the work she had been forced to let drop the previous March, and worked to such purpose that when September set open the doors of Ardwell College it found her pretty well equipped to enter them with the other seniors. By taking a few more hours' work each week she could, she knew, overtake her class.

### THREE GRACES AT COLLEGE

The Graces were rooming together once more in the Evans House, for Mrs. Fox had learned enough of the happenings of the past months to enable her to form some pretty accurate conclusions, and, astute woman that she was, to determine to keep these three friends together during their senior year if a little contriving could compass it.

It took some time for Grace Houghton to win back the place she had lost in the esteem of some members of her class, but they were, upon the whole, a loyal, generous-hearted set of girls, and ready to meet merit half-way. So, after a little, matters adjusted themselves, but in spite of everything good-will prompted Grace felt that she had in a measure drifted away from her old friends. They were just as cordial as ever, and she soon became quite as much a part of all the college fun, but the girls seemed so much younger to her, and less mature in thought and action. She hardly realized why. She did not understand that the world does not count time by years. If the girls appeared immature, she did not real-

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ize that it was because she had already walked, self-sustained, where they had never ventured.

Meanwhile honors were coming to Grace Percy, and as they were very unexpected, they were the more valued. She was comfortably settled in a hammock under the trees on the back campus, with reference-books and note-books at hand, one afternoon, while close by, curled up like a kitten, lay Grace Langford, *not* preparing for the next day's recitations, but reading *The Virginian*, and rapidly lessening the pile of rosy apples beside her. Girls were strolling hither and thither in the warm autumn sunlight, and now and again a bright leaf drifted lazily to the ground. Presently two girls came flying across the lawn to pounce upon Grace and cry:

"You've got it! You've got it, and we want to be the first to congratulate you!"

"I've got what?" asked Grace, glancing about in a bewildered manner, as though she might thereby discover her new possession.

"You're Ivy Orator! The vote was almost unanimous. Oh, we're so delighted!"

### THREE GRACES AT COLLEGE

At first Grace could hardly believe them, but was brought to a speedy realization of the truth by Grace Langford, who bounded to her feet crying:

"I knew it! *I knew it!* Of course we'd be elected. Don't you care, little Grace Langford; you can't spout a little bit, but you can buy the *ink* that will write the oration!"

Grace Houghton was not present when all this delightful news was being circulated, for her afternoons were given over to work with the tutor whom she had engaged to "boost her along for a time," as she expressed it. But Grace Percy had reason to know that this friend had promptly learned of the honor which had come to one of the trio. When she went to breakfast the following morning a telegram lay at her place. It ran:

"Just had Grace's message. Splendid! Wouldn't miss it for worlds. FATHER."

As the seniors led from chapel that morning Grace was conscious of the many eyes upon her, and wondered if the freshmen felt the same awe

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and reverence for her that she had felt when as a freshman herself she had looked upon the senior then elected for Ivy Orator. Nor did the honors end just there.

The "little bird who tells" had evidently been gossiping far away in New York, for when six o'clock rang out from one of the church clocks that evening two young men alighted from the train and hurried away to the Mount Hope Hotel.

Two hours later a maid carried a card to Grace Percy:

"A gentleman for you, miss," she said.

"Why—" began Grace, and then exclaimed: "It's Harold Prescott, girls. What under the sun has brought him here just now?"

"How modest we are!" cried Grace Langford. "Such a commonplace honor as Ivy Orator doesn't mean a thing, does it?"

"What nonsense, Grace. How could *he* know anything about that?"

"Have you forgotten that you have a brother-in-law down in New York who thinks you're about the biggest thing in Ardwell But hurry



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down and don't keep the poor man sitting there in suspense."

Grace was only human, and barely twenty-one, so her hasty glance in her mirror must be forgiven. She wore a very becoming gown, and as she disappeared Grace Langford sang after her:

"There she goes, flushed like a rose,  
All bedecked in her prettiest clothes!"

Grace turned to wag a finger at the singer and retort: "I'll get even with you, young lady."

## CHAPTER XVIII

### TWEEDLEDUM AND TWEEDLEDEE

GRACE PERCY was still in the reception-room having an undeniably pleasant chat with her caller, who had brought with him all the latest news from her home and much more besides. A matter of business was calling him to Boston, he said, and having learned from Mr. Morford that honors had come to Miss Percy, he could not pass through Ardwell without stopping off to offer his congratulations.

Meanwhile, upon the other side of the Evans House, several girls were gathered in the Graces' study, where a sweet concoction of maple-sugar and walnuts was bubbling away in a chafing-dish. The windows were open, for the autumn night was soft and balmy, with "My Lady Moon" smiling in all her harvest glory. Gay snatches of song and neals of merry laughter went floating

### THREE GRACES AT COLLEGE

across the campus, and presently another voice responded from some unseen quarter. Grace Houghton paused in the act of pouring her candy into a pan, and all ceased chattering to listen.

"It's a mandolin, but *where* is it?" cried Bess Clifton.

"Below, below, below," laughed Grace Langford, running to the window to peer down into the grounds, but naught save moonlight and motionless shrubbery was to be seen. The other girls crowded about her whispering opinions and suggestions. Still the soft strains of the mandolin, now supplemented by a rich barytone voice, which seemed to come from the very midst of a thickly leaved smoke-tree directly beneath the window.

" Stars of the summer night  
Far in yon azure deep,  
Hide, hide your holy light,  
She sleeps, my lady sleeps,"

were the words which floated upward.

"Not if she knows it!" whispered Grace Langford, and Grace Houghton broke in:

"Which of us is he serenading? Here, girls,

## TWEELEDUM AND TWEELEDEE

we can't let our cavalier go a-begging," and catching up a handful of fudge, still in a semi-congealed state, for it had been made by Grace Percy just before her visitor was announced, she hurled it at the smoke-tree with such precision of aim that both song and music were instantly hushed, and out strode a manly form to call in a voice strongly suggestive of a large mouthful of fudge:

"Good shot! It's mighty good, but it knocks poetry and sentiment into a cocked hat. Let's have something jolly," and out upon the pulsing air, supported by the voice, tinkled:

"Oh, you are the honey s-u-c-k-l-e,  
And I am the bee-ee-e-e-e!"

As the melody proceeded the singer warmed nobly to his ditty, and caution was flung to the evening zephyrs. Then came an obligato not set down in the program.

"Hi, now! Git out o' this. It's all agin the rules o' the *institootion*, an' ye ought to know it. Come on now wid me!"

### THREE GRACES AT COLLEGE

Then ensued a rush and a scramble as two pairs of feet made rapid tracks in the direction of the highway. Next came a crash and a vehement:

“Lord ’ave mercy, it’s them beastly barbed wires, and my legs are ruined!”

While these things were happening at that side of the Evans House, Harold Prescott’s call had come to a reluctant end, and he was bidding Grace Percy good night. He descended the steps, walked rapidly toward the arbor-like gateway, and was about to pass into the street when a firm hand was laid upon his arm, and an enraged voice demanded:

“Couldn’t ye look where ye was goin’ and not tear through me flower-beds, ye great, blunderin’——!”

“Let go of my arm! What do you mean?” demanded H. P., Esq., who was not in the habit of being addressed in this high and mighty manner.

Now it is quite possible that explanations would have been very simple had not two causes

## TWEEDLEDUM AND TWEEDLEDEE

combined to make them hopeless. The first was that Owen Hobbs, porter, janitor, and general factotum of the Evans House, had been taking just one more convivial glass than was wholly prudent, and the other lay in the fact that he was by no means the first person to get hopelessly mixed regarding the identity of these two brothers. Moreover, his face, his hands, and his shins still tingled from his encounter with the barbed wire which protected his flower-beds, and, well—trifles often lead to tragedies. So he did *not* let go Harold Prescott's arm when bidden to do so, but clung to it with the tenacity of a leech, and the next thing he, Owen Hobbs, knew he was lying upon the greensward giving voice to language not set down in the Ten Commandments. Just at that moment an officer of the law made his untimely appearance and matters grew more complicated.

“I tell you it's all a ridiculous mistake, officer. I never saw this man in my life until he came blustering up to me not five minutes ago——”

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"Ah, stow that!" interrupted Owen. "Never saw me! I guess not! Didn't I kitch ye a ping-pingin' away on ye banjer under the young ladies' winders? And where *is* yer banjer, anny how?" peering around the officer's rotund person, as though to discover that tell-tale instrument.

"I *haven't* any banjo!" with decided asperity. "I had just come from the Evans House, where I'd been calling——"

"Yis! True enough; ye *had* jist come from the Heavens 'Ouse, an' me hot fut after ye, too," broke in the irate Owen.

"Shut up!" was the officer's terse interruption. "You can make your explanations at the captain's office down yonder."

"What nonsense! Send up to the Mount Hope Hotel and ask for Wallace Prescott; I dare say *that* will set things straight. Here, take this," and he hastily scrawled a message upon one of his cards.

Twenty minutes later Owen Hobbs was blinking hard at two young men and saying:

## TWEEDLEDUM AND TWEEDLEDEE

"Well, if it wasn't *'im*, it was *'im*, but *'ang me* if I know which *'im* it was."

Then the weeks glided away, and Thanksgiving carried the Graces to Seventy-ninth Street for a brief holiday, and gave Tweedledum and Tweedledee an opportunity to snarl up some more luckless beings.

Had Grace Langford remained at the Percys' for the holiday this incident might never have occurred, but she was spending her Thanksgiving with a cousin whose home was in Brooklyn, hence the dividing of the brothers' paths upon this particular evening.

The electric lights flashed and twinkled along the length of Fifth Avenue, stretching out for miles to grow dimmer and dimmer in the prospective alongside the park, when two young men descended the steps of a dwelling a few doors east of the avenue in Forty-ninth Street and walked rapidly toward the busy thoroughfare. They crossed it and walked briskly up to Fiftieth Street, turned west, and paused at the foot of the L-station stairs. They were talking earnest-



### THREE GRACES AT COLLEGE

ly, and seemed so absorbed in their subject that they were more or less unconscious of what was taking place about them.

"At what time can you meet me at the club?" asked one.

"Just as soon as I pay this call; not later than ten-thirty."

"All right. I'll see Professor Stewart on my way up to Clinton Avenue and get his opinion, then, after I've paid my visit to little Miss Dixie, I'll join you at the St. Nicholas, and we can go over the thing together. Now mind you're on hand."

"On hand! Perhaps you'd better keep a lookout for the time yourself," was the laughing retort.

"Oh, I'm not so deeply hit as all that. By-by! I'm going to get a package of cigarettes," and with a brotherly nod Wallace Prescott entered a tobacco-shop close at hand.

Harold mounted the stairs, his thoughts deeply occupied with a curious legal question, which also involved a medical one. Hence, this

## TWEEDLEDUM AND TWEEDLEDEE

comparing of notes with his brother, who had just taken his degree at the Columbia Medical School. He purchased his ticket, and as he dropped it into the box asked:

“Will the next be a Harlem train?”

“Harlem just gone; second,” answered the man at the ticket-box, mechanically raising and jamming down the handle which cancels the tickets.

Harold Prescott walked to the upper end of the station and sat down upon one of the benches to await the “Second.” Other passengers gathered upon the platform, hiding him from sight. A train came to a screeching standstill, and a brakeman called out, as he had, no doubt, called a hundred times that day:

“Fif’y-ed Street next stop. Ch-an-ge fer H-a-r-lam!”

The ticket-puncher glanced wearily around, and at that instant a young man came tearing through the station to drop his ticket into the box and rush for the train. Too late! Slam went the gate: chng. chng. the electric motor

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"Was that a Brooklyn Bridge train?" asked the young man excitedly.

"Brooklyn-nothin'! Git over ter the other side if yer want a down-town."

"By George!" exclaimed the young man, glancing hurriedly about him and vanishing through the "Exit" gate.

"He's a chump! Out a nickel by that," commented the official, and turned to look at the train, which was now nearing the station.

"H-a-r-r-r-lem train! Har-r-r— Ye fool! Didn't I tell ye to go to the 'ither soide if ye want a Bridge train," he shouted at a figure which was hurrying aboard the Harlem train, and who looked at him in blank amazement.

"Oh, these here young swells!" he grumbled, as the Harlem train drew away from the station. "They ain't fit to be let go by theirsels's. Well, I'll be —! How the divvil came ye *there*!" he yelled to a figure which stood calmly smoking a cigarette upon the opposite platform.

"Didn't you send me here?" was the amused inquiry which came across the tracks.

## TWEEDLEDUM AND TWEEDLEDEE

"Did ye joomp arf that train?" noddin' and pointin' his thumb wildy toward the last car of the Harlem train just turning into Fifty-third Street.

"No; I came up the stairs."

"Ye did *not*! I saw ye git arn that cyar. Say, Jerry! Git that feller's ticket."

"*He's* all right; he come troo the arffice. His ticket's here," replied the autocrat of the down-town ticket-box.

"I tell ye I saw him git arn that Haarlem train wid me two eyes!" shouted the indignant "Up-town" agent, resenting the smile upon his junior's face.

"An' *I* tell ye I saw him come troo and put his ticket in me box wid *mine*!"

"Better give it up, old man," was the parting advice of the object of the dispute, as he stepped aboard the Bridge train, which then drew up to the station. As it rumbled away the "Up-town" gateman removed his cap, scratched his gray head once or twice, and mumbled: "Glory-be, am I sittin' thot owld that I see *double*?"

### THREE GRACES AT COLLEGE

Thanksgiving holidays are short ones, and ere long the girls were back at Ardwell. Days grew shorter and nights longer and colder. An extra snooze in the morning was a thing to be hailed with joy, for getting out of a snug bed to dress by gaslight is one thing, and by glorious sunlight and to the songs of many birds quite another.

Grace Langford was the leader of the Banjo Club this year, and she was resolved to bring it through with flying colors at the Glee Club Concert to be given in March, for, as she drolly put it:

“Girls, we can’t croak as the *biggest* toads in the puddle, but we’ll do something to make them recognize that we’re toads worth noticing.”

So they pinged and punged away with a will, and as time went on grew to feel pretty confident of themselves for the great event of the year.

Christmas brought the usual flurry and flitting, and then came February with its valentines, many posies, and much nonsense. When the Graces returned to their snug quarters after a busy morning they found three large boxes upon

## TWEEDLEDUM AND TWEEDLEDEE

their study-table. They pounced upon them and tore off the wrappings. Grace Percy's was filled with English violets and primroses; Grace Langford's with splendid American beauty roses and jessamine, such as grew near her Carolina home; Grace Houghton's held a mass of heartsease and forget-me-nots.

Whence had they come? No cards revealed the senders' identity, but presently Grace Houghton smiled a happy little smile, for down in the very bottom of her box lay a sheet of paper upon which was written in a hand which had become very familiar to her:

“The time will bring on summer  
When briars shall have leaves as well as thorns,  
And be as sweet as sharp.”

She had often heard that quotation.

Glancing slyly over her shoulder at the other two girls she remarked, *apropos* of nothing:

“Well, if it wasn't 'im, it was 'im, but 'ang me if I know which 'im it was”

## CHAPTER XIX

### AT THE GLEE CLUB CONCERT

THE Opera-House was packed from orchestra circle to balcony. Hundreds and hundreds of men and maids, matrons and sires, brothers and cousins, even unto the tenth degree, swarmed all over the place, and Yale, Harvard, Princeton, as well as a dozen other high and mighty centers of learning, had sent their representatives to hear, to see, to do the dutiful, and to spread abroad the fame of Ardwell's talent.

Behind the scenes all was bustle and confusion. The leader of the Glee Club, a tall, graceful girl, who had given much time and thought to her duties, and who was wonderfully proud of her club, hurried hither and thither giving a word of encouragement to one group of girls, a word of admonition to another, and a word of praise to a

## AT THE GLEE CLUB CONCERT

third. She was much beloved by all, and they were ready to do or die at her bidding.

In the green room Grace Langford was running over a certain melody with three of her Banjo Club, for she wished to come out strongly in that particular number. She looked as pretty as a vision in her white point d'esprit with its yards and yards of baby satin ribbon, and white lilacs upon her pretty shoulders and in her dark hair. Excitement had brought a bright color to her cheeks, and no gipsy ever looked more radiantly lovely than little olive-skinned Grace, as she darted about like a butterfly.

The other Graces were not members of the club, for, as Grace Percy put it: "Nature made one of us a beauty, one no mean interpreter of the dramatic art, and one an every-day, commonplace girl; could we demand more of her?"

But neither Grace Percy nor Grace Houghton was liable to be overlooked, for each possessed an indescribable something to command attention even among so many.

Mr. and Mrs. Percy, Daniel Morford and his



### THREE GRACES AT COLLEGE

wife, and the Prescotts had come up for the occasion, and now, with "the Graces to show us off properly," as Wallace Prescott insisted, occupied one of the boxes.

Presently the Banjo Club made its appearance, and from that moment Wallace Prescott was lost to all else, and before the number which they were giving was ended one pair of immaculate gloves was hopelessly ruined.

Mr. and Mrs. Morford promptly took Grace Houghton under their wings, Daniel remarking dryly:

"If the house should catch a-fire I'd hate to have you depend upon that M. D. for your safety; the stage is entirely too handy. Come along here beside the little wife and me. We'll have a chance to tell you the news between times and hear some, too."

Grace Percy was wholly occupied with her escort, so could hardly be expected to look out for her sister charity.

The Banjo Club did good work that night, and none of its members guessed that the enthusiastic

## AT THE GLEE CLUB CONCERT

and sustained applause of a certain individual in one of the boxes was making their leader's eyes shine as they did, or had anything whatever to do with the almost magnetic influence she seemed to exercise over them.

And flowers! Could one be left in any of the shops of Ardwell? But the concert, like all other delightful things, came to an end, and the performers were showered with posies and congratulations. As Mr. and Mrs. Percy and their party were to spend the night at the Mount Hope Hotel, arrangements had been made for the Graces to spend it with them. When the curtain fell upon the last number, a rollicking banjo quartet, Wallace Prescott arose hastily from his chair and said rather incoherently:

"I'll join you later. She was a great concert; it played that last number in fine style; I—" and vanished through the box-door.

"Better come back and get your own hat; mine may not fit you," Daniel Morford called after him, eying with some misgivings the piece of head-gear he had just taken from one of the boxes.

### THREE GRACES AT COLLEGE

at the back of the box, and smiling quizzically at the others, who were convulsed with laughter.

Grace Langford was standing in the midst of a group of men and girls, her arms filled with roses, her cheeks glowing, her eyes sparkling, her pretty lips smiling and disclosing her pearls of teeth, to say nothing of a dimple in her left cheek. She certainly was a spectacle to cause any man's heart to glow, so it is not in the least surprising that that organ began to pump an extra beat or two in the breast of one man in particular when he opened the stage-door and beheld this radiant little lady.

Regardless of the others who crowded about her he hurried forward crying:

"Let me express my warmest congratulations, Miss Langford. Biggest thing Ardwell has ever given! Never heard anything like that banjo quartet [Grace had been the soloist]; it was simply immense!"

Those grouped about Grace dropped back a little to make room for this vigorous young man and his hurricane congratulations, for where is

## AT THE GLEE CLUB CONCERT

the college man or maid who does not instantly "catch on?" Not a few lips twitched, several pairs of bright eyes twinkled, and nearly everybody suddenly recalled a duty or an engagement which admitted of no delay whatsoever.

"Oh, good night, and thank you so much, Bess. Yes; in the green room, Belle. I'll see you in the morning. So kind of you, Mr. Weston—the roses are beautiful," and so on, until the next thing Grace knew she had been relieved of her posies, gently forced into a chair while her carriage shoes were drawn upon her feet, a long fur cloak placed about her shoulders, the hood laid gently over her head, and then she was hurrying through the crowd to her waiting cab.

Now Ardwell is *not* a large town, and its cab-drivers are, upon the whole, reasonably familiar with its highways and byways, yet—there are, of course, exceptions, and this particular driver might have been a new one pressed into service for that rushed evening, when every available vehicle, and a few more beside, was in demand. At any rate, as soon as he had succeeded in free-

### THREE GRACES AT COLLEGE

ing his cab from the shouting, calling mob of cabmen and their cabs, which blocked the entire street in front of the Opera-House, he started off.

Grace was occupied with settling her furs and her roses, so did not pay much attention to other things. Her escort was assiduously wrapping the fur robe about her feet, for the March night was wild and blustering, with little suggestion of spring.

The drive from the Opera-House to the Mount Hope Hotel, under ordinary conditions, could hardly have consumed more than twenty minutes, yet "some one had blundered," that was evident, for when Grace came to a realizing sense of her surroundings she discovered that the idiotic cabman was making his weary animal toil up "Parnassus," and that "Helicon Hall" was less than a block away.

"For mercy sake what had brought that cabman up here! He must be insane! Mr. Prescott, do speak to him and make him take us right back to the hotel. The Graces will think I'm lost. I never heard of anything so perfectly idiotic. He

## AT THE GLEE CLUB CONCERT

*knows* I'm at the Evans House, for he has driven me time and time again this winter, and I told him distinctly when I engaged him that I wished to be taken to the Mount Hope Hotel when the concert ended. Stupid thing!"

"He must be a great chump. Don't worry; I'll get out and speak to him and start him in the right direction," and Grace's cavalier opened the cab-door to hail the driver and then step out into the snowy road to point out to him the error of his ways. Grace could not hear the conversation, for Harold Prescott had carefully closed the cab-door; no doubt to protect her from the keen air.

"An' ye brought me way up this hill jist fer nothin'?" was the cabman's irate demand.

"Sorry, but it was a mistake! I understood Miss Langford to say that her friends would meet her here, but I find they are at the hotel, so take us right back there, please."

"An' me after comin' to the top of this bloom-in' hill in all this drivin' wind and the snow half a fut deep. Well, she'll have ter pay fer it, anny-

----- "

### THREE GRACES AT COLLEGE

"Oh, that's all right. Here, take this, I guess it will square the bill."

It was too dark just at this point of the road for the man to see the value of the bill, which he promptly slipped into his inner pocket, but he gave a satisfied grunt of approval and gathered up his reins.

"You'd better drive up to that level before you attempt to turn. It's pretty icy just here," was Wallace's admonition, as he entered the cab.

"Gammon! Do ye think I'm *leather*?" was the cabman's comment beneath his breath. Then the horse was driven a little farther up the hill, turned around and started in the direction of Ardwell once more. Perhaps that cabman had a warm spot in his heart for his fares, or perhaps he was not too old to recall the time when his Bridget was young. At any rate, he drove with exemplary caution, and the cab crept slowly down the hill.

"That donkey!" raged Grace. "If I don't read the riot act to him, and the proprietor of the stable, too, for sending such a dummy. Did you

## AT THE GLEE CLUB CONCERT

ever know of such a situation? Why—" But Grace's words died away in an unintelligible murmur, as a pair of hands were laid gently over hers which clasped the roses, and the electric lamps which flashed into the cab at intervals revealed a face very close to her own. Then a voice said softly:

"Don't blame the cabman—blame *me*, and forgive me, too, if you can. It was my only opportunity to see you alone, and I *couldn't* help taking advantage of it. Are you very much vexed, Miss Lang—Grace? I don't believe I can hold a candle to Hal for wits, common sense, doing things, and all the rest of it, but, well—I don't want to half try unless you will let me do the hustling for you, dear. I know I'm not anything like good enough for you, but I *do* love you, and if you'll only give me the right to I'll prove that I can drive a precious sight straighter to any destination *you* tell me to than that chap on the box out yonder, and I won't let *any one else* countermand your orders either. Will you let me



### THREE GRACES AT COLLEGE

Grace gave a little gasp, for the words had come with a rush. The hands which held hers seemed to have taken a great deal for granted and now completely imprisoned hers; the poor posies had slipped to the bottom of the cab unnoticed. The face came closer to her own, and the cab was certainly limited as to breadth.

"Can't you answer me, Grace?"

"I—I—" she began helplessly.

One hand held more tightly, but the other found it necessary to draw her wraps more closely about her shoulders, and—well, somehow the arm was a very athletic one, and not easily resisted. Besides, Grace was very, very tired and—do you know of any better resting-place for a very tired, somewhat bewildered, and exceedingly pretty little head from which a fur hood has been considerate enough to drop at just the right moment, than a broad, manly shoulder beneath which, under the circumstances, a heart is beating far more rapidly than it would beat in the presence of a great danger?

## AT THE GLEE CLUB CONCERT

Plod! plod! plod! fell the horse's feet upon the snowy road.

"I'm waiting, dear."

Grace felt the warm breath near her temple, and an odd little sound came from the depths of her fluffy hair.

"Oh, do you mind? I think I— Why are you sure you want? Ought—" But she was interrupted by an exceedingly self-satisfied, low laugh.

"No, I don't mind *waiting* in the least, if I may *wait* this way. And *you* needn't think at all; I'll think for you. As to being *sure*, well, I'm willing to go broke all the rest of my life if I lose on whether I'm 'sure' of what I want this time. Not a great deal in bulk and weight, I'll admit, but just pure gold all through, and I'm going to claim it for my very own, because I'm dead sure I want it just about a hundred times more than any other fellow I know; a dear little Dixie sweetheart."

Fifteen minutes later the cab drew up at the

### THREE GRACES AT COLLEGE

Mount Hope Hotel and Grace and her escort hurried into that caravansary to be greeted by choruses of:

"*Where* on earth have you been?"

"What happened?"

"What made you so long in getting here? The supper is stone cold!"

"Why? What— Oh, Grace, your *pretty lilacs!*"

But Grace did not pause. She rushed into the room reserved for the girls and left explanations to be made by whomsoever chose to make them.

It was Daniel Morford who remarked seriously, as he handed Wallace Prescott his hat:

"*My* head took to swelling something like a year and a half ago, and as it has never recovered its normal size, I'll thank you for my own bonnet."

## CHAPTER XX

### COMMENCEMENT

THE senior play was in full swing, and every available corner of the house filled to overflowing with everybody's relatives. The play, *Much Ado*, given for the first time by the Ardwell girls, represented earnest and hard work. Grace Houghton was eager to have her college outshine all others, and had done her utmost to help, to suggest, and to give them the advantage of her experience. They begged her to take the character of Beatrice, but she refused most positively, saying:

"Why should I, a professional, with all the advantages and experience which that implies, take the finest rôle and deprive Bess of her greatest opportunity? Indeed, I shall not! I'll be anything else you want me to, but not Beatrice."

### THREE GRACES AT COLLEGE

So the character of Margaret was assigned her, and a fascinating one she was, too.

To every one's surprise, Grace Percy had been selected for Hero by the trainer D'Argent when that autocrat came up to decide and pass judgment on the girls who were trying for the various parts, for he declared that she was by far the best of the four aspirants for the part. Grace had been more surprised than any one, for, even though she had worked hard upon the part, she was not in the least sanguine of achieving the honor of playing it. Moreover, her Ivy Day oration was absorbing no small portion of her time.

The play was well along and enthusiasm at its height.

"By Jove! Isn't that little Margaret great?" exclaimed a handsome, portly father to an equally handsome mother. "Why, even Irving's cast couldn't turn out a better Margaret than that."

"Yes, we are very proud of her," answered his daughter, a junior usher, who stood in the aisle

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beside him. "She was offered the character of Beatrice, but refused it because she has been on the professional stage. Don't you remember her as Pretty Peggy at the Jefferson Square last winter? She went on the stage in order to pay her way through college, and has done wonders this year. She said she had no right to take the character of Beatrice because it would deprive Bess Clifton of an opportunity to distinguish herself."

"Well, she is the finest Margaret I've ever seen," and the handsome head was wagged most positively.

This conversation took place exactly beneath one of the boxes.

"Don't see anything the matter with Hero, either," muttered a masculine voice, whose owner followed the misfortunes of that luckless lady with flattering attention.

At length it was over. Benedict and his capricious Beatrice had tripped it lightly; Hero and her Claudio were wholly reconciled. Men

### THREE GRACES AT COLLEGE

garet and her partner had reached the point when their amiable offices were recognized and all difficulties were smoothed out.

Then followed Baccalaureate Sunday, and when it dawned many a weary senior actor and junior usher still slept the sleep of utter weariness.

It was barely five o'clock when Grace Houghton awakened. The early sunlight, which she so loved, was flooding her little room, and rising softly, lest she waken the sleeping occupants of the room beyond, she crossed to the open window, dropped upon the broad window-seat, and resting her arms upon the ledge, looked off toward Mount Hope, glowing in the rosy morning light. A light haze hovered over the summit, concealing the highest peak from view, but as she sat reveling in its beauty a gentle breeze caused it to waver, curl, roll about itself, and at length rise higher and higher, meanwhile growing more and more rosy in the early sunlight, until it became a gorgeous veil hovering over the great green mountain. At length it began to float away

## COMMENCEMENT

northward, and Mount Hope towered upward in all its stupendous majesty.

A wistful smile curved Grace's lips as she watched it, and a mist crept over her eyes.

"I wonder if my clouds and shadows will float away like that?" she whispered softly. "Sometimes they seem to cling so closely about me," and a little shiver crept over the white-gowned figure sitting there in the cool morning air.

"Are you courting inspiration, or a bad cold?" asked Grace Percy, as she let a fluffy shawl fall upon her friend's shoulders, and then snuggled down upon the seat beside her.

Grace Houghton placed her arm around Grace's waist and rested her head upon her shoulder.

"I think I am courting friendship, and have not wooed in vain. Dear old Grace. You've been a great comfort to your fire-brand all these years, do you realize it? All I am, or ever hope to be, I owe to you, and more than once I've wondered how you ever happened to take me in hand and the secret of your power over me."



### THREE GRACES AT COLLEGE

believe it is because you've never, *never* lectured and prosed to me: just lived your own life and let me find out that it was worth living."

"Hush! You sha'n't!" whispered Grace Percy, placing her hand over Grace's mouth.

"Take it away! I shall if I want to, and you've got to listen. This is early morning confession, and you're bound to be my mother confessor. Do you see those rosy clouds floating away over there? I'm wondering if my gloomy spots are going to turn rosy ones, and float off too. Somehow, Grace, I believe they are. Last year was a sort of equinox to stir things up generally. I was nearly blown away by it, and should have been if you hadn't held tight fast to me. This year has been 'the uncertain glory of an April day.' Do you believe the 'winter of our discontent' can be 'made a glorious summer?' My work did me good, Grace."

She paused, and Grace, who knew her moods so well, made no reply, but waited for the rest.

Presently Grace resumed her softly spoken monologue:

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“ ‘For it so fall out,  
That what we have we prize not to the worth,  
Whiles we enjoy it, but being lacked and lost,  
Why, then we rack the value.’ ”

Suddenly sitting up she demanded:

“Do you know there were never truer words written than those? I had loads of things and no end of opportunities, but I never realized it until they were lost and it was too late. No! *Not* too late either! I’ve just waked up! Wait until you see what another year brings. I’ve found what I can do, and *now* I feel fitted to do it. You’ll be proud of me yet, Gracie.”

“I’m so proud of you this very minute that I’ve no words half strong enough to make you understand how proud!” cried Grace, gathering this storm-tossed friend into her arms with a happy little laugh, which came very near being a sob, for tears had welled up into her eyes.

At this instant a doleful, sleepy voice wailed out from the adjoining room:

“ ‘God—bless the—man who—first invented  
STEEPS!’ ”

### THREE GRACES AT COLLEGE

"So Sancho Panza said, and—[a prodigious yawn] so—say—I.

"But—(oh, d-e-a-r me!) blast that man—(uh-m-m!) with curses loud and deep—(v-e-r-y deep) who first invented, and then went round—(ah! um!) ad-vis-ing that artificial cut-off, early rising! Wow-o-oo-w! Where *are* you girls anyway? And what under the sun are you doing perched in that window at this unholy hour? It can't be more than five o'clock."

"As a matter of fact, it is creeping rapidly toward eight," cried Grace Percy, breaking into peals of laughter at sight of the yawning, blinking little figure standing in the doorway.

"That's a base fabrication! I know it!" cried the figure, suddenly rousing into animation and vanishing.

"Oh, he'll wait for you, Grace dear," called Grace Houghton. "Besides, you can do marvels in the way of a fetching toilet and a substantial breakfast in an *hour*. And you *know* you ought not walk across the links while the grass is wet with dew. And, Grace, I've an idea that the

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links won't be *wholly* deserted, either, for I overheard Bess say something about strolling out that way this morning to show them to Mr. Weston."

At this juncture a bedroom slipper came hurtling through the door at Grace's head, only to miss it and sail out of the open window behind her.

The morning passed quickly, and when three o'clock came all hurried down to the church in their pretty gowns, and the long row of graduates passed between the two rows of *alumnæ* waiting to see them. Great bunches of daisies separated them from the other classes, and made them realize more than ever that they had, indeed, come to the dividing of the ways. How pretty the choir looked, and how softly the summer silks and fans rustled until the sound of the organ drowned it all. Later came the musical service when the chapel was thrown open to guests.

Mr. and Mrs. Percy, Isabel and Daniel, Adalaid and Grace Houghton, Grace Langford and her devoted cavalier Grace Percy and Harold

### THREE GRACES AT COLLEGE

Prescott occupied pews in a corner beneath the gallery, where an open window gave them glimpses of Mount Hope in all the glory of the setting sun. Perhaps it was accident, and perhaps it was fate which was responsible for the pairing off in those pews. Whatever arranged it, it seemed to be entirely satisfactory to all concerned.

Mr. and Mrs. Percy, with Grace Houghton and Adalaide, sat in the front pew. That four should occupy that one, while six chose to crowd into the one just behind it, was no concern of the others who thronged the chapel.

Grace Percy sat at the end, with Harold Prescott next her. Grace Langford and her escort sat next them, and Daniel and Isabel at the end next the aisle.

Of all the college services, this is probably the most beautiful and touching, for the organist wanders along from one exquisite air to another, and last of all the Ivy music sighs out from the great organ as a sort of benediction and requiem for the dying day. Twilight creeps over

## COMMENCEMENT

the land, and the bedtime calls of the birds mingle with the soft notes of the music.

It is a time and an hour to awaken all that is best in one, and the world seems a very dear old place to live in, with the fading light filling it, the tender music softening our hearts, and those we love best close at hand.

As the strains died away, was it any wonder that Grace Percy felt a hand laid upon her own, which rested upon the back of the pew in front of her? "Twilight gray" had begun to fill the world, and no one guessed that one heart had sent a silent message to another with that touch. Yet, half an hour later, two people sat beneath the whispering trees on the back campus, and as one held the other's hands close clasped in his he asked:

"Are you willing to take up a new course of study, dear? The great study of life, and may I be the instructor for all time to come?"

## CHAPTER XXI

### IVY DAY AND THE END

SUNLIGHT flooded all the world, turning the campus and college buildings into a glowing picture on the morning of Ivy Day. Relatives and friends surged toward an awning not far from College Hall, and a steady stream of white-gowned seniors flowed toward the Evans House, where the procession was being formed. Forty junior ushers strove to encompass them with a laurel rope and confusion reigned. On either side the walk from the Evans House to College Hall stood more girls than one could easily count, and each was armed with a camera. As the long line appeared the crowd went nearly frantic in its efforts to see everything to be seen and to hear everything to be heard. The ushers with their white-ribboned sticks had their hands full.

## IVY DAY AND THE END

Not far from the awning stood Mr. Percy and his party.

"Here they come, Daddykins! Oh, do, do, do look at Grace! Isn't she the sweetest thing you ever saw, and aren't you so proud of her that you couldn't hold another speck of happiness," cried Adalaide, clasping her father's arm in her excitement and tiptoeing in order to see a little farther. "And mamma, her gown is such a dear one! How did you ever make it so beautifully? Grace went nearly wild over it when she took it from the box."

"How could I help making it? None but a mother's hands should fashion a graduating gown," answered Mrs. Percy, a wonderfully sweet smile lighting her face.

"Who is the leader, do you know, daughter?" asked Mr. Percy.

"Bess Clifton, the class president, and the girl next her is vice-president. I don't know her name. Aren't our girls sweet together? Grace Houghton is simply superb, and Gay girlie is altogether too bewitching. Don't you think so



### THREE GRACES AT COLLEGE

Wallace?" turning suddenly to the man standing directly behind her.

"Well, I've an idea that I know a good thing when I see it, my lady. Nobody can hold a candle to my little Dixie," were the words confidently whispered into Adalaide's ears.

"Don't you believe him, Adalaide. The dignity of that whole class is upheld by the Ivy Orator. Don't try to dispute it, for I know what I'm talking about. But if you people want to get seats you'd better be thinking about it, for the expansive properties of that platform are diminishing rapidly. Come along," and Harold Prescott began to work his way through the crowd, the others following close behind him.

The Ivy procession had now reached the steps of the hall, where it formed into an effective group. The class president began her address, but her words were drowned by the hum of voices all around her. At length, however, the hubbub ceased and her voice became audible. When her address was ended the Glee Club leader gave the signal, and out upon the air rang the stirring col-

## IVY DAY AND THE END

lege song. As the strains died away Grace Percy stepped forward and was greeted by a vigorous clapping of hands, which—may it never be whispered abroad—was started by a most sedate-looking young man and supported by his double. The faculty looked as much astonished as though the roofs of all the college buildings had suddenly taken flight and then roosted upon their reverend heads, for *that* feature of the exercises had not been set down in the program.

The sunlight fell full upon Grace, turning her hair into a golden glory. Her face was slightly flushed and her eyes shone from repressed excitement. Clear, soft, and beautifully modulated, her voice could be distinctly heard. She seemed to forget the vast throng of people before her, to lose all sense of the multitude of eyes fixed upon her; her class, her college, and all they stood for, shut out all else from her thoughts, and she spoke as simply and unaffectedly as though she were talking to them alone. Humor and pathos followed each other through her oration, and smiles or tears responded

### THREE GRACES AT COLLEGE

At length it was over, and she stepped down amid a storm of applause as the ushers hurried to surround the class, and the Ivy Song arose in one mighty wave as the girls made their way to the farther side of College Hall, where their ivy was to be planted. Then a general stir took place, and the procession broke ranks to mingle with friends and relatives.

When twilight fell the campus presented a picture of fairyland with its innumerable lanterns. The Glee Club sang song after song, which went floating across the campus as the members strolled about under the great trees, and the scent of the flowers and newly cut grass mingled with the soft strains, and Ivy Day ended as it had ended many, many times before.

Commencement exercises filled the chapel to overflowing the next day, and the alumnae filed sedately in, headed by the junior ushers with their wands, the seniors following like a long chain of white posies. They took their places in front, and rose in a body as the president appeared, to remain standing until he had taken his

## IVY DAY AND THE END

seat upon the platform. Then followed the impressive service, the prayers, the hymns, the speeches, until at length it was all over, and each member of the graduating class held her "sheepskin," or—somebody else's. Then no time was lost in reaching the Howard, where a collation was spread for the seniors and alumnæ. When this was over, 1903 held its last class meeting, and many plans were laid for the Alma Mater, which each member had grown to love so dearly.

Class supper took place in the Gym, where the Graces were toasted as Our Ivy Orator, The Leader of our Banjo Club, Our Future Terry, and through the open windows rang:

" Oh, *here's* to our 'Three Graces !'

The girls who set the paces,

Drink them *down*, drink them *down*, drink them *down*,  
down, *down* !"

Class histories convulsed the hearers, and the hours fled away on the wings of laughter and song. Eleven-thirty crept upon the revelers before they realized it and it was time for their beloved class song

### THREE GRACES AT COLLEGE

"All hail ! all hail, our violet, Naughty-three !  
All hail ! all hail, we beaten can not be !  
The violet's bound to conquer,  
As you will surely see,  
So hail ! all hail, to our SENIORS !"

Then silence fell upon them for a brief interval and they heard the class of Naughty-four singing each other home, their voices carrying with wonderful sweetness upon the midnight air.

"Answer them, girls! Answer them with Ardwell," cried the class president, and springing to their feet they sang with a will:

"Oh, *here's* to good old Ardwell, drink her down !  
Oh, *here's* to good old Ardwell, drink her down !  
Oh, *here's* to good old Ardwell,  
Are her 'sheepskins' won right hard ? Well—  
Drink her *down*, drink her *down*,  
Drink her *down*, down, *down* !"

Then the janitor came to put out the lights, and the class of 1903 went out into the night, where their junior friends were waiting to bid them farewell and Godspeed, for their roads lay far apart, and many realized that they were say-





Held them for a second closely clasped.

## IVY DAY AND THE END

ing farewell forever, although they dared not even hint it.

The three Graces walked toward the Evans House together. As they had entered college, so were they leaving it, but the ties which bound them to each other were strengthened. Grace Percy's and Grace Langford's relations to each other would ere long be a much closer one, and Grace Houghton had earned the right to claim the respect of both. They paused upon the steps of the Evans House with the great silence of the night all around them and the moon riding high over head. A gentle wind stirred the leaves, and far away in the woods beyond the campus a night-bird called faintly. Grace Percy, who was one step above the other, laid a hand upon each shoulder, and, drawing their heads close together, rested her own upon her friends' for a moment, saying softly :

“ The dawn is not distant,  
Nor is the night starless :



### THREE GRACES AT COLLEGE

The girls' hands stole up to hers and held them for a second closely clasped, but neither spoke.

Twelve hours later a merry party was speeding toward New York, and when the great panting engine came to a standstill in the Grand Central Station, Mr. and Mrs. Percy and the three Graces were met by Harold and Wallace Prescott and Daniel Morford, for they had returned to town with Isabel and Adalaide the previous afternoon, and were now "on deck," as Daniel expressed it, to see that these five people got safely landed in Seventy-ninth Street.

That night the dining-room was crowded to its utmost capacity. Adalaide had planned the dinner, and proved pretty conclusively that she could superintend domestic affairs as well as musical ones, for, as she demanded:

"Would you have every member of the family desert the little mother? Isabel can't think of a single thing but that apartment up in Eighty-fourth Street now, and Grace will be equally hopeless and miles above such mundane matters

## IVY DAY AND THE END

as beefsteaks and potatoes. Ardwell, alone, would have brought that to pass, I dare say, but *now* the last stroke has been given," and she frowned threateningly upon Harold Prescott as he inspected critically the bit of tomato salad he was in the act of conveying to his mouth, and then remarked:

"I'll bet a fiver that when *we* set up our ménage we will turn out a salad that will make this one sell at a discount."

"Sonny, your salads won't be *in it* with ours! Your salads will look like thirty cents when Dixie makes one!"

"Don't count your chickens before they're hatched, honey. I never made a salad in my life, and I reckon I'll let *you* make mine for me," was Grace's gently drawled and wholly complacent retort.

"Strike one!" cried Daniel Morford.

"Stop quarreling, children!" cried Isabel. "I can't allow such unseemly recrimination. Eat your salad, all of you, and be thankful that you have the prospect of claiming for a sister-in-law."

### THREE GRACES AT COLLEGE

one who can turn out such a tempting dish as this is."

"And let's all give three cheers for her this minute," broke in Grace Percy. "First, because she is to be with us in future instead of delving away at Laurel Hill. And second, because it is high time she had some fun, for she has worked like a Trojan for me, and if I ever amount to anything I shall have her to thank for my boost over the first 'Thank-you-ma'rm' of knowledge. Now: Rah! rah! rah! for our Adalaide!" and catching up her glass of claret, she led the cheer in which all joined with a will.

"It has been a year of blessings for us all," said Mrs. Percy, when the uproar subsided, "and it seems to me that I have been the one to reap the greatest number. I am to have my eldest daughter at home after eight years of earnest, successful labor; my second daughter has made it possible for me to claim this dear laddie for my son," and she laid her hand affectionately upon Daniel Morford's arm. "My third daughter has brought to my home the one whom I may in time

## IVY DAY AND THE END

call my second son, and when I do so I shall claim a family connection with two other people who have become very dear to me. Then, last, but by no means least, I shall ask the privilege of calling this dear girl my daughter and of filling the obligations which the name 'mother' implies." She took Grace Houghton's hand in hers, and turning to Mr. Percy added: "Father, I believe you have a few words to say which we will all be glad to hear."

Grace Percy's face betrayed a knowledge of what was coming, but the guests looked mystified.

Mr. Percy rose from his seat, and, taking his glass of claret in his hand, said:

"I drink to the health, the prosperity, and the success of our dear adopted daughter, Grace Houghton Percy, with whose consent we will sign and have witnessed this night the papers which shall give us the privilege of henceforth calling her our dearly beloved daughter, whom we may guard and protect in her chosen career as we would guard and protect our own flesh and blood. This step is taken with the full consent

### THREE GRACES AT COLLEGE

and sanction of our own beloved children. May God grant us the wisdom and the strength to do unto her as we would wish others to do unto ours."

As Mr. Percy proceeded, Grace Houghton's face had grown whiter and whiter. Then as one dazed she rose to her feet, and holding to the back of her chair, stared with wide eyes at the speaker. When he ceased she left her place and moved toward him with both hands extended before her, as one in a dream. Mr. Percy's eyes were moist as he clasped those slender hands in his own, and his voice quivered as he asked:

"May we claim this dear child for our own?"

"You want me to take your *name*?" whispered Grace. "To be your daughter? To call Grace *sister*?"

"Can you do this?" asked Mr. Percy very gently.

"Can a starving man refuse *food*!"

It was a pathetic little cry, and she turned from Mr. Percy to stretch her arms toward Grace Percy.

## IVY DAY AND THE END

When had those arms ever failed her? They were there now to clasp her tightly and make her feel in the warmth of human contact that the heart beating beneath them had room enough in it for this lonely, storm-tossed sister from whom fate had swept all upon whom she had any claim.

"Please, sir; a telegram for Miss Houghton," said a maid.

Mr. Percy took it, tore open the envelope, and read:

"The Jefferson Square Company offers Miss Houghton the rôle of —, in *Mice and Men*, to be produced during the coming season. Salary \$——a month. Contract to be signed at once."

(1)

THE END



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